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New Statesman

END OF EMPIRE

Churchill's stand against history

PLUS: NCCL in crisis • Labour's black sections • Maureen Duffy • Liverpool union row • Books

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New Statesman

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New Statesman

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Going for the high ground

LABOUR HAS not only caught up the government in the opinion polls. It is now beginning to produce policy proposals — for jobs, for education. It is in the process of setting an agenda of its own for the next election, rather than reacting negatively against Thatcherism and all its works.

There is still lacking, though, any very clear sense of a political philosophy to carry the party to victory and, equally important, to inform policy when it is back in power. Detailed policies are important, but they can often also be hostages to fortune. They give the government, with its superior research resources, targets to practice shooting at over the next couple of years. By the time Labour gets to power circumstances may have changed — the economy will be weaker and real unemployment higher for sure.

Strands of political philosophy on the other hand have a more pervasive political influence. In part the Kinnock regime has succeeded in 'going back to Tawney', in reasserting the positive and socialist ideals of equality. This is a correct reaction to what the Bishop of Durham in his Radio 4 Hibbert Lecture this week analysed as the moral and economic core of Thatcherism:

> To return to the ethics of 19th century entrepreneurial individualism is either nostalgic nonsense or else a firm declaration that individual selfishness and organised greed are the only effective motivations for human behaviour.

It would be difficult to encapsulate more concisely Thatcherism's twin concerns for a return to 'Victorian values' and for the encouragement of an 'enterprise culture'. In this respect Thatcherism displays an equally crass ignorance of both history and economics.

But there are other strands of political philosophy that the Left must rightly and confidently claim as its own. One is democracy, another is the cause of civil liberty. As a matter of fact almost all the Left in British politics *is* more democratic and open than almost any of the Right. Yet it is an issue on which the Left has generally — with the usual help of the media — allowed itself to be placed on the defensive.

The campaign against the abolition of the Greater London Council and the Metropolitan Counties, though, is proof of the extent to which the concept of 'democracy' is politically powerful. In the case of the GLC more and less powerful arguments have been made about saving London's services and not destroying the concept of unitary local government. But the argument that has decisively turned public opinion against the government is that it is doing away with directly elected government in the nation's capital. No one would claim that the GLC was an institution previously close to the heart of the average Londoner. Yet because Mrs Thatcher and Mr Jenkin have been shown up as undemocratic autocrats the slogan '74% say No to no say' is today the truth of the matter.

Instead of being put on the defensive, as it is, by episodes like the refusal of the NUM last year to hold a strike ballot, or by the present allegations of ballot rigging in the Transport and General, or by accusations that cliques are rigging constituency selection and re-selection meetings, the Left in all its institutions must embrace, and present itself as the champion of, democracy.

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This is not just a narrow question of using more postal ballots — another issues on which the government has pushed the Left onto the defensive. There are certainly situations in which postal ballots are an effective way of engaging memberships. Equally, in some situations — the annual election of the boards of major building societies for example — they are as much a total sham as the vaunted Tory concept of shareholder democracy. There are other equally valid mechanisms for consulting memberships, workplace ballots, members' meetings, delegate conferences and the like, which are often more appropriate.

The message though should be clear and simple. It is that an autocratic and patronage-ridden Tory Party — which symbolically does not even elect its chairperson — has nothing to teach the Left about democracy. In practice this means espousing things like 'one member one vote' in constituency parties, allowing black sections to affiliate to parties where appropriate, increased openness about voting results in unions (the T & G seems to be moving with commendable speed to right its own internal problem) and support for real democracy in the workplace, schools, local government, the National Health Service, water authorities and elsewhere.

There is an equal need after six years of Thatcherism for the Left to become the champions of civil liberty. The Thatcher government has created a climate of State repression of the individual that has gone a long way towards destroying completely this country's reputation for tolerance and fairness. There is no question here of 'going soft' on the issue of law and order. Every country needs effective police and the security services. But they, too, must be made democratically accountable. The miners' strike demonstrated that chief constables are in practice answerable to nobody directly, but to the Home Office indirectly, for what they do. That is not an acceptable system of accountability. The European Convention on Human Rights should be made part of British law. The Official Secrets Act should go. The Home Office should be split and its judicial functions removed to a department concerned with justice. Major reforms of the judiciary are needed to make it independent of the government. All legislation affecting civil liberties should be urgently reviewed with an eye to reform. And so on.

Mrs Thatcher has made the defence of civil liberties an urgent political issue. The Left should capture the high ground with it. □

Trouble at the Palace

ALL THE OBVIOUS points about the Princess of Michael of Kent Affair have been made. So just two footnotes.

1. When those on the Left call for inquiries into this 'appalling public scandal', they are playing the Conservative establishment game. That reaction accepts that the extended Royal Family is a vital national institution, instead of a ludicrous social and political anachronism, and that even unimportant cousins must not be touched by the breath of scandal.

2. When the full history of denazification is written it will produce many real scandals, not just such *Daily Mirror* exclusives. All the allies saved Nazi war criminals, like Klaus Barbie, when they offered anti-Russian intelligence and, in order to preserve the German social status quo, stopped denazification reaching very far into the German upper and professional classes. In any case, the still secret files about Nazi sympathies that really matter to the Royal Family's reputation are not concerned with Baron von Reibnitz, but with the Queen's own uncle, the Duke of Windsor. □

On the right lines.

The first 100 mph newspaper train runs from Euston on Saturday night to Scotland carrying Scottish supplies of The Sunday Times, The Observer and Sunday Telegraph.

British Rail InterCity in fact runs more trains at, or over, 100 mph than any other country in the world.

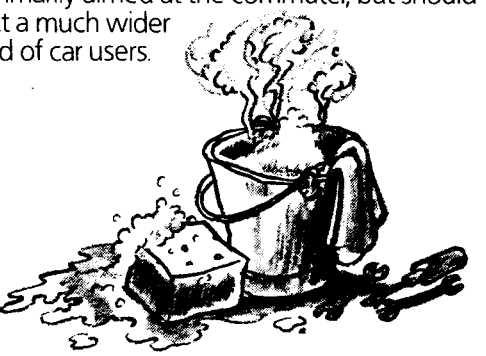
The InterCity 125 high-speed trains operate in almost half of InterCity services, and the Flying Scotsman now covers the 400 miles between London and Edinburgh in only 4½ hours (a journey that in 1933 trains used to take 8¼ hours to do).

Car service while you travel by train.

The first of a network of car servicing and valeting outlets has been opened at Rayleigh in Essex at the British Rail car park.

Travellers are able to leave their cars from 6.30 in the morning and collect them with the service work done when they get back to the station in the evening.

The 'Serviceman' service, in association with British Rail, is operated on a franchise basis. It is primarily aimed at the commuter, but should attract a much wider spread of car users.



We're getting there.

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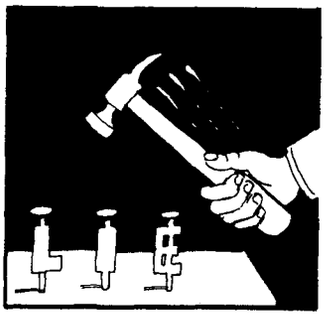
DAMNED LIES AND THE TORY PARTY



WITH ITS TREACLY voice-over from actor Anthony Quayle, sounding like James Mason talking out of the grave — and a simulacrum of Conservative party chair John Gummer, or possibly the real thing — last Wednesday's (10 April's) Tory party political broadcast's running theme and graphics were *Tonight we want to nail a lie*. Two can play at that language. Herewith, ideological inexactitudes in the broadcast — and Thatcher in Jakarta showing that in instant rewriting of history, as in all else, she leads her party from the front. JOHN RENTOUL, PETER KELLNER and MICK HAMER report

LIE

'LABOUR Derbyshire is planning to spend over £1 million on socialist propaganda, and a further £17,000 on a private opinion poll to see if you believe what they tell you.'

Last year Derbyshire county council spent £600,000, *including* £17,000 on two opinion polls, on a public awareness campaign, providing information about (among other things) bus passes, home helps and services for blind people. There was nothing private about the opinion polls, including the cost, and there's nothing unusual about councils, or the government, or the National Coal Board (see *NS* 22 March) using polls. The Tory borough of Hillingdon uses MORI. The broadcast contrasted spending on 'propaganda' with what Derbyshire was 'threatening to cut'; 1,000 teaching jobs, five children's and three old people's homes and a home for the mentally handicapped. The list, drawn from the last edition of the council newspaper, was used to illustrate the size of the cut required to meet the government's spending target for the council. It was followed by this simple sentence: 'Deputy leader councillor Heathcote stressed that the authority *would not consider* such drastic cuts.'

LIE

'CONSERVATIVE Lincolnshire spends £150,000 on administration for every £1 million spent on maintaining roads, and Labour Nottinghamshire spends £298,000.'

The admin costs quoted cover spending on other things than road maintenance. They cover road *building*, which Notts spends twice as much on as Lincs. But they also cover public transport, which requires more administration. Lincs spends just £411,000 on public transport. Notts spends £1.8 million plus £2.3 million on concessionary fares. The figures are derived from the annual return published by the public sector accountancy institute CIPFA, which specifically warns against comparing admin costs between councils in its preface, and points out that councils define admin costs differently. The point is best made by looking at the figure for Tory Surrey. Surrey spends exactly the same on road maintenance as Labour Notts ('which prefers administration to action'): £16.2 million. Notts spends £5 million on total 'highways and transport' admin. Surrey spends £6 million.

LIE

'IN HEREFORD and Worcester the Conservatives allowed the dinner ladies to set up a private school meals service. From this and other savings 175 additional teachers are being employed and another £¾ million spent on school books and equipment.'

Since the last elections in 1981, the number of teachers employed by Hereford and Worcester has fallen by 251, although the teacher-pupil ratio is about the same. It's true that this is up from the trough of 1983-84, but the improvement was in response to a school inspectors' report for 1981-82, which said four councils weren't spending enough on education to fulfil their statutory obligations. Hereford and Worcester was one of them. And in 1981 the council was taken to the High Court for charging for music tuition. The High Court ruled that curricular activities had to be free. The council's response was to take tuition off the curriculum.

LIE

'ANOTHER thing the Conservatives of Hereford and Worcester have introduced are private buses on routes where there were no buses before'.

The *Guardian* Diary disclosed last week that the two women rattling on about the wonderful new service were Tory party hacks. But there's more. The bus shown on the broadcast was run by Primrose Motors, a firm founded some 50 years or so before the new private bus experiment in Hereford began. Far from increasing rural services, Primrose cut its services in rural areas to begin running buses in the town of Hereford shortly after the experiment began. It opted out of the cut-throat competition there just before Christmas. The route shown on TV — Leominster to Shobdon — has run for many years and is subsidised by the council. There is *no* competition on this route.

LIE

'SHEFFIELD businesses are going, or have gone, driven out by high rates.'

This is breathtaking, coming only weeks after the publication of the most comprehensive analysis of the evidence for this suggestion. The conclusion of the Cambridge University study of *'The Effect of Business Rates on the Location of Employment'*, commissioned by the Department of the Environment, found, except for commercial offices in central London, 'no evidence that either the level of rates or the increase in rates affects the distribution of employment between local authority areas'.

LIE

'THE LEFT don't care that John Lewis pays more in rates per square foot in Newcastle than it pays even in Oxford Street, London.'

The Labour council in Newcastle cares very much, but knows where the main burden of blame lies. Unlike central government, it has *reduced* its spending (adjusting for inflation) since 1979, but the government's rate support grant has been cut from £68 million to £36 million in 1983-84 prices. Note: 51 per cent of Newcastle city's spending is on education. ●

AH, LEADERSHIP!

IN JAKARTA last week, on her Far East junket, Mrs Thatcher was asked about last year's row and humiliating government climb-down over student grants. Her answer: 'Student fees was done much too fast and when I got back — I was away — and actually looked at the details, it was too fast, particularly on a group of people who very much plan their budget'.

Apart from the fact that she was stabbing her colleagues in the back, this was rewriting history.

12 November Following the Chancellor's annual public spending statement, Joseph in a Written Answer set out what had been agreed for his department for 1985-86. This included means testing, for the first time, of tuition fees as well as maintenance grants.

28 November Mounting protests at the change in government policy culminated in a mass student demonstration and lobby of Parliament.

29 November (ie 17 days after the announcement of the new policy, by which time the extent of opposition to it was clear) Mrs Thatcher gave Sir Keith Joseph her wholehearted support: *'I believe that it was a disgraceful demonstration, which stopped traffic, ambulances and fire engines, and undermined any sympathy that some people may have for the students.*

'I repeat that no students anywhere in the world are treated more generously than British students. In Sweden and Japan they would receive loans, and in many other countries they could receive part loans and part grants.

'Britain has the most generous student grants in the world, and such demonstrations undermine the faith of those of us who have continued to give student grants'.

29 November Sir Keith Joseph gave no hint that he or the Prime Minister were intending to back down. In a defiant speech in Bristol he said: 'Students will still be a privileged minority in our society'.

The Prime Minister did then go abroad (29-30 November) on an official visit to France, and for the next two days to an EEC summit in Dublin. But by then she was well aware of, and *supported* the argument that the education cuts should fall a bit more on the better off.

What changed her mind was the mauling Sir Keith Joseph got in committee — the most substantial Tory revolt since Mrs Thatcher became Prime Minister. After that she saw that she had no option but to throw Sir Keith to the wolves. Accordingly on 5 December Joseph went back to the House and withdrew the government's proposal about tuition fees. ●

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Boy was 'on canvas' at fatality-prone Glenochil

THE 16 YEAR-OLD who was found dead in his cell in Scotland's Glenochil young offenders' institution this Monday (15 April) — making the seventh such cell death since 1981 — had been on the punishment known as 'on canvas'; and had been told of his father's death during his three-month sentence.

His death at the penal complex near Alloa, second of its kind this year, is the sixth by hanging (four in the young offenders institution, two in the detention centre). A seventh youth died of solvent abuse.

Derek Harris had been sentenced to three months 'short, sharp shock' at Friarton detention centre, Perth, but shortly after (11 February) the medical officer told the Scottish prisons department that the boy was unsuitable for the regime. Deeming him an 'escape risk' the authority refused to put him in the more open regime of Polmont detention centre, insisting he go to Glenochil.

Both institutions are notorious in Scotland for their reliance on a military style and 'tough' discipline. Eleven days into his sentence Harris was told that his father had died. He was put on Strict Security Observation (SSO) under which inmates are held 'on canvas' — in solitary, with a canvas mattress and canvas smock, and observed every 15 minutes. He was taken off SSO a week ago, but after a minor dispute with another inmate, the MO recommended he be held in his cell till his release, due the following week.

Scottish Secretary George Younger has consistently refused to set up a full-scale enquiry into regimes such as that at Glenochil. Meanwhile Leon Brittan continues to assert that the 'short, sharp shock' is a success and will be extended throughout detention centres south of the Border.

Richard Kinsey

Europe told of the agonies in El Salvador

AS THE *New Statesman* **goes to press, two Salvadorean women, Carmen Campos and Laura Pinto, should be on their way home after a European tour — accompanied by two MEPs. The Dutch consul in El Salvador will meet them on arrival. None of it's for pomp. It's because of deep concern about the women's safety.**

They are two of the 500-strong Committee of Mothers of Disappeared Prisoners who every week, scantily disguised in dark glasses and white headscarves, keep vigil outside the cathedral in San Salvador holding photos of missing relatives. The Mothers' hunger strikes and sit-ins at the ministry of Justice, Supreme Court, Presidential House and National Parliament have led on two occasions to the release of trades unionists.

Campos and Pinto spoke at last weekend's London Latin American festival (13 April), having been refused visas for the USA, where they were to have received the first of the new annual human rights awards by the Robert Kennedy Foundation. (Robert d'Aubuisson, extreme right-wing Salvadorean leader described as a 'pathological killer' by former US ambassador Robert White, got a visa to raise funds and talk to Congress just weeks before Campo and Pinto were refused).

Both women have relatives who were victims of the Salvadorean national security forces or death squads. Laura Pinto's husband, a trades union activist, was murdered in 1980, leaving her with four children and seven-months pregnant. Carmen Campos has lost 10 of her immediate family, two of whom (in common with 3,000 others) are posted 'disappeared', eight of whom have been found, tortured and murdered.

Pam Isherwood/Format

Pictured while visiting London this month, Laura Pinto (l) and Carmen Campos (r), 'mothers of the disappeared'

Frightful scars

When Campos herself asked security forces for the whereabouts of her brothers and her daughter, she was raped, tortured, and sprayed with bullets. Her body — as she has publicly demonstrated while in Europe — is spattered with scars. Her right breast has been cut off. She has artificial tubes for internal organs.

Neither woman has been holding out much hope for improvements under the Christian Democrats with Duarte as president. 'We know his record', they say — a surge in death squad activity and a record number of assassinations during his first term of office (1980-82), 30,000 out of the total of 55,000 since the coup of October 1979.

Jane Dibblin

MISCELLANY

ARTS SUPPLEMENT

Soleless decision

Israel's military leadership has vetoed Tresham college lecturer Robert Pollak's 'living sculpture' plan to float 6,500 plastic footprints, size 8, on the Sea of Galilee.

Dear auntie BBC . . .

But that's not the scandal we really want to go on about. Would someone please be good enough to inform the BBC that working members of the House of Lords are *politicians*? Mrs Thatcher's witty appointment of Lord Gowrie as arts minister has so overawed the Beeb that it treats him as if he were the Duke of Devonshire passing non-controversial remarks on old master drawings — and the situation is driving Labour's commoner shadow arts minister Norman Buchan into the bin. ITEM: When Gowrie was invited onto the *Newsnight/Arena* mega arts special on 18 March, Buchan wasn't. He wrote to Alastair Milne, BBCDG, to ask if the mandarins are aware that some people take political sides on arts funding, heritage etc, and got back a miracle of disingenuous quasi-grovelling: sorry if Gowrie's appearance had made Buchan cross . . . never been any intention of making the programme political (!) . . . point taken, arts do have their political angle.

. . . Lord Gowrie is . . .

Cut now to 1 April. ITEM: Gowrie again takes to the air, on Kaleidoscope *(Radio 4). Put up against him (with him?) is Sir William Rees-Mogg of the Arts Council: no invitation to Buchan. Gowrie and Mogg don't so much cross swords as pat buttoned foils in their Tweedledum-Tweedledee routine, which had already had the nation falling about with laughter on 18 March. Buchan again takes to his pen. 'We made the decision,' replies* Kaleidoscope *producer Tom Sutcliffe, straight-faced, 'to concentrate on the changing relationship between the two principal agents of arts funding. We then worked hard to identify those areas where we thought there might be differences between Lord Gowrie and*

The Alexis to Norman Buchan's Krystal — dictator-of-terms Lord Gowrie, who, Beeb please note, also speaks for the Treasury in the Lords, which seems a vaguely political occupation

Sir William'. The work must have been gruelling. 'In the event,' says Sutcliffe manfully, gulp, 'it appeared that the extent of their agreement is very wide'. And then in an absolute wonder of phrasing, rejecting any idea that the programme was unbalanced, 'the fulcrum was located at a slightly different point'.

. . . a politician

Cut to Good Friday. ITEM: Norman Buchan is in Madrid when he hears that a penny has dropped deep within the labyrinth of the Beeb. Heavens! Labour's shadow is invited to appear *with Lord Gowrie* on a BBC Radio Manchester arts special. Buchan cancels a meeting with the Spanish minister of culture and flies home for the breakthrough confrontation. Deposited breathless at the studios he learns . . . that Gowrie has reacted by pre-taping an interview, and won't appear in person. The ignoble Lord, informed that an Opposition spokesperson is to appear, has called it 'inappropriate. I don't,' he says, 'want to turn it into a political slanging match'. The toadying Beeb supinely broadcasts Gowrie's tape instead of telling him to . . . stuff it in the Woolsack.

IBA books the cooks

Not that things are any better on 'the commercial'. The IBA is appointing a second — yes, second — Cordon Bleu cook, to cater for 'between two and 30 people daily'. Must be hell guessing quantities. But why no Cordon Rouge . . . Buchan, reach for your pen.

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DOUNREAY ACCIDENTS 'TRIPLED' IN 1977-82

THE NUMBER of accidents involving the release of radiation within the Dounreay Nuclear Plant on the north coast of Scotland increased more than threefold between 1977 and 1982, according to an internal report leaked to the *New Statesman*. There were just 70 'radiological incidents' of all kinds in 1977, compared to a total of 222 in 1982. ROB EDWARDS reports

THE 40-PAGE Dounreay health and safety report for 1982, marked 'official use only' and dated July 1983, says that one reason for the increase was the heavy workload at the reprocessing plant known as D1206, which 'led to something of a deterioration there'. The report also points out that the number of 'minor incidents' at the Prototype Fast Reactor on the site increased from 13 in 1981 to 34 in 1982. This included a rise in the number of 'surface contamination incidents' from four to 15 and in the number of skin and clothing contaminations from five to 11.

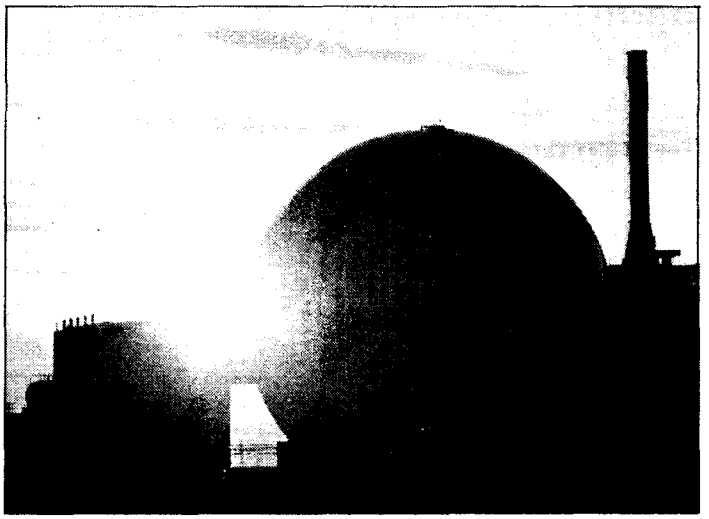
A spokesperson for Dounreay says that the number of incidents reflected the type of work being done, and refused to reveal any more up to date figures. It's understood however that the total number of incidents fell to 163 in 1983 as less work was being done at D1206. Trade unionists at the plant admit to being 'upset' that the level rose so high, but stress that most incidents were very minor.

There was just one 'serious' incident in 1982 which involved the release of plutonium when a plastic bag spilt its contents onto the floor. This was formally reported to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate at the time and, according to the report, led to one worker being exposed to three times Dounreay's annual limit for the type of plutonium involved. In another incident an engineer received a radiation dose to his hand which caused him to exceed the legal limit for that quarter of the year.

The report reveals that in 1982 there were five breaches of the 'conditions of criticality' which are meant to minimuse the risks of a runaway nuclear reaction — compared to just one in 1981. It says however that there was no significant risk of any such 'nuclear excursions' and that the conditions needed to be rewritten.

Other documents leaked to the *New Statesman* shed new light on the controversy surrounding the discovery of radioactive particles on beaches close to Dounreay between November 1983 and March 1984. The Scottish Office, according to a minute of a meeting last January, regarded this as a 'fairly serious occurrence' showing a 'lack of control'. A series of special meetings between staff and management was held to allay fears about the incident. Partly as a result of pressure from the trade unions, radiation monitoring on the beaches was increased.

But public relations concerns were, as ever, paramount. According to the minute of a meeting on 24 January last year, trade unionists pressing for increased monitoring of public beaches were 'reminded of the importance of avoiding causing alarm to the public by the sight of intensified monitoring activity'. ●



Dounreay — more alarms and excursions than anyone has admitted

Bus wheeze

TRANSPORT secretary Nicholas Ridley is changing the definition of 'rural' with the agreeable side-effect that there will be an increase in the number of Tory-held constituencies (and marginal seats) which will benefit from the cash.

Under Ridley's rules the rural population maximum becomes 25,000. Perhaps it is just a coincidence, but this benefits Conservative-held marginal constituencies. ●

NOW LAWSON'S £1 BILL SOARS TO £170M

TAXPAYERS could eventually lose over £170 million following the much-criticised 'rescue' of a private bank by the Bank of England.

THE FAILED bank — Johnson Matthey Bankers (JMB) — collapsed last September, without apparent warning. JMB's net losses are now estimated at £80 million.

But the loss to the public may be much larger than that. Two weeks ago, the Bank of England rushed through a debt-sharing agreement, finalising details of how they and City institutions would share JMB's debts, in order to avoid the risk of other banks or institutions collapsing.

The sudden signature of the agreement follows months of avaricious wrangling between the Bank of England, clearing banks, merchant banks, and gold traders. The ostensible purpose of the sudden conclusion of the argument seems to have been to allow private institutions who accept some of Johnson Matthey's debts to claim almost half the losses back from the Inland Revenue.

Nationalised duck

When JMB collapsed, the Bank of England formally took over liability to pay all its debts, in order to preserve 'confidence' in the banking system. The Bank did this by paying a nominal £1 for all of JMB's (worthless) shares — effectively nationalising the defunct and debt-ridden City lame duck. The Bank of England then became obliged to repay all of JMB's creditors.

But it was always agreed that a consortium of private banks and gold traders would pay off some of JMB's debts. Under the new agreement, the Bank of England and the private institutions will each pay half of JMB's debts, up to a total limit of £150 million.

Since JMB's debts are estimated 'only' to be £80 million, the Bank of England — and hence the public purse — should theoretically be left having to cough up 'only' some £40 million, or half the total debt. But two factors suggest that the public loss will in fact be far larger.

● FIRSTLY the clearing banks and other institutions who have agreed to help shoulder JMB's debts have — by signing the debt-sharing agreement just before the end of the 1984-85 financial year — ensured that the £75 million 'provisions' they have made (most of them haven't actually paid anything yet) will be set against this year's profits. Since corporation tax on the major banks' vast profits can be as high as 45 per cent, the Inland Revenue could forfeit as much as £33 million in lost taxation.

UPP

'Kit' McMahon, deputy governor of the Bank — rumour says the Treasury tried to scapegoat him

● SECONDLY the Bank of England has already secretly handed over £100 million to JMB to help it keep going. This was revealed in the *New Statesman* three days after Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson told the House of Commons that the JMB rescue had only cost the public £1 (*NS* 21 December 1984).

Ah, it's a 'facility'!

Forced to admit the payment, the Bank at the time described the £100 million as a 'deposit', rather than a loan. But last week, they admitted that the money has not been given back, and instead called it a 'facility' — in other words, a loan of potentially indefinite duration.

Under the present government, the ultimate fate of the rescued JMB is certain either to be liquidation, or re-privatisation. The House of Commons Treasury Committee would therefore be well advised to keep the fate of the £100 million 'loan' under extremely close scrutiny. Without this indefinite loan, it is likely that JMB would collapse once more — making it impossible to return the bank to the private sector.

The track record of Mrs Thatcher's privatisation campaign has already frequently demonstrated her willingness to write off such public debts to the advantage of private speculators. ●

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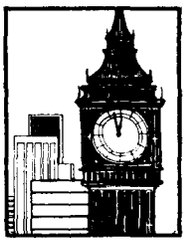

PETER KELLNER

How to measure the Tories' mid-term blues

IN TWO WEEKS' time just over half of Britain's electors will be able to vote in the non-metropolitan counties in England and Wales. Assuming that the next general election is held in the summer or autumn of 1987, next month's vote will provide the nearest thing we have to a half-time verdict on the second Thatcher government.

Suppose Labour does well. Two particular arguments will be mounted to undermine that success: first, that local elections provide little guide to national trends; and second, that Labour jolly well ought to be ahead at this stage in a parliament — indeed, it ought to be much further ahead. Before looking at the elections themselves, let us dispose of these points.

First, local elections and national trends. It is true that most electors do not vote in local elections, and that local issues can affect the outcome in some places. But overall, the pattern of voting broadly follows national loyalties. In May 1982, for example, at the height of the Falklands War, the Tories benefitted in district elections from the party's national popularity — even though nothing could have been further from the responsibilities of local councils than the task force in the south Atlantic.

Nor is there any evidence that one party's supporters are significantly more likely to turn out to vote than another's. There has, however, been a slightly different phenomenon in some years. Some electors seem to take the opportunity to cast an anti-government protest vote. Both last year and the year before, MORI conducted polls for the *Sunday Times* in the run-up to the spring local elections. MORI asked both about local and national voting intentions. They found that Labour did slightly better, and the Tories slightly worse, when the issue was local voting.

A more substantial attempt to minimise any Labour successes will involve the argument that Labour ought to be ten or 20 points ahead, not a measly five or six. This is based on the folk memory of past governments, which have frequently found themselves miles behind the opposition in mid-term. In fact, the record is far from consistent. The last Labour government, for example, remained neck-and-neck with the Conservatives for two years after the October 1974 election, and only slipped decisively behind the Tories when the IMF crisis broke in the autumn of 1976. One year later, after the crisis had abated, Labour recovered once more to level-pegging and only fell back again during the winter of discontent that preceded the 1979 election.

If the Tories now settle down at 32-36 per cent, their standing will be nothing out of the ordinary by past government standards. This will represent a decline of 7 to 11 points since the last general election.

According to Gallup, this is broadly the same decline that the Conservatives suffered during the two years following their 1955 and 1959 victories, and a more serious decline than suffered either by the Conservatives after 1951 and 1970 or by Labour after 1945 and 1974. Only Labour after 1966 and the Conservatives after 1979 were doing worse at the same point in their administrations than the Tories are doing today.

HAVING CLEARED away those issues, down to business. Next month's elections will choose county councils that were last elected in May 1981. That was before the SDP started fighting elections and the last time Labour performed well in any nationwide electoral test. So, if Labour does no more than hold its own in two weeks' time, the party will have some reason to be pleased.

One quick way to compare county results with national trends will be to watch what happens in Cheshire, Humberside and South Glamorgan. These are all counties won by Labour in 1981 (in the case of Cheshire without an overall majority) but which the Tories hope to regain. They also happen to be counties whose distribution of the vote in the 1983 general election closely match the figures for Great Britain as a whole (see table for figures). Each of the three parties — counting the Alliance as a single party — in each of the three counties achieved a share of the vote within two points of the national average. So if Labour retains control of all three, that means Labour is ahead nationally; if the Tories take all three, Labour is behind.

Even if the likeliest outcome next month is little net change compared with 1981, there will still be a number of closely fought contests. Only half of the 47 counties that will go to the polls can be considered 'safe' in either Labour or Conservative (or, in the case of the Isle of Wight, Liberal) hands. Ten Labour counties and 12 Tory counties are at risk (see table). Two other counties, Shropshire and Clywd, have no one party in power, but the number of independent councillors is likely to mean that they remain hung.

Lancashire and Nottinghamshire are two counties that Labour will watch nervously. Lancashire is one of two counties (the other was Avon) that Labour won in 1981 but failed to win in 1973 — Labour's previous good year for county elections. Lancashire also has a high proportion of marginal wards and so is very sensitive to small movements in votes.

Nottinghamshire looks as if it ought to be safe Labour territory, with a majority of 22. But in last June's European Parliament elections Labour failed to win the Nottingham Euro-seat: the swing to Labour in the area was lower than elsewhere in Britain. Now the miners' strike is over, the Nottinghamshire result will show whether Labour is still suffering from the side effects of the divisions among the miners.

The Liberal/SDP Alliance hopes to increase its number of county councillors by 200 to 500 — which would give them one in six of all county wards in England. More to the point, this would almost certainly mean more hung counties. Northumberland is Labour's county most at risk: the Liberals already have a solid base of 15 of the county's 66 councillors; and in 1983 the aggregate Alliance vote in the county was ahead of both Labour and Conservative.

Most of the counties that the Tories risk losing also have substantial numbers of Liberal concillors. In addition, as the table shows, in most of the vulnerable Tory counties, the Alliance vote was substantially higher than Labour's in 1983.

Not the least of the points to watch for when the results are counted is whether the Alliance gains most in those areas where it is already the clear challenger to the Tories. If Labour manages to retain control in Avon and Lancashire, and if the Alliance wins the balance of power in Essex and Wiltshire, then — mid-term or not — Mrs Thatcher will have cause to worry. □

The battlegrounds

Labour at risk

County	1981 Maj	(1983 vote %) Con	Lab	Lib/SDP
Notts	22	45.1	32.2	21.9
Staffs	14	44.9	32.9	22.1
Humberside	9	43.9	29.2	26.8
Lancashire	7	48.2	29.4	21.9
S. Glamorgan	2	42.2	29.0	26.5
Northumberland	2	33.5	30.0	36.3
Avon	2	47.3	24.3	27.6
Cumbria	1	46.7	31.2	21.8
Northants	*	49.0	25.5	25.3
Cheshire	*	45.6	29.7	24.4

Conservatives at risk

Hereford & Worcs	6	52.3	15.3	31.4
Lincolnshire	6	53.7	15.1	31.4
Wiltshire	6	50.3	14.9	34.2
North Yorks	5	56.1	16.3	27.4
Essex	4	51.9	17.8	29.8
Oxon	3	51.5	18.4	29.3
Cambs	2	51.0	17.0	31.6
Beds	*	51.0	22.6	26.3
Berks	*	57.7	16.0	28.1
Glos	*	50.7	16.7	32.1
Leics	*	50.6	25.3	22.7
Warwicks	*	49.2	24.3	26.0

*No overall majority; minority control

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RIGHTS FOR OUR WORST ENEMIES

NCCL's annual meeting this April confronts the two painful questions of the last year: do fascists have rights and is the right to strike-break a civil liberty? Bernard Crick says 'yes' and 'yes'

THE 1985 annual general meeting of the National Council for Civil Liberties, being held in London on 27 and 28 April, will be a make or break occasion for its public effectiveness.

Liberties are curious things. People take liberties with them, and other people use them in nasty ways. Other people use the same liberties that we want to use but for purposes we may regard as at least anti-social. No one except an anarchist would believe that liberty is a *sufficient* principle for social justice.

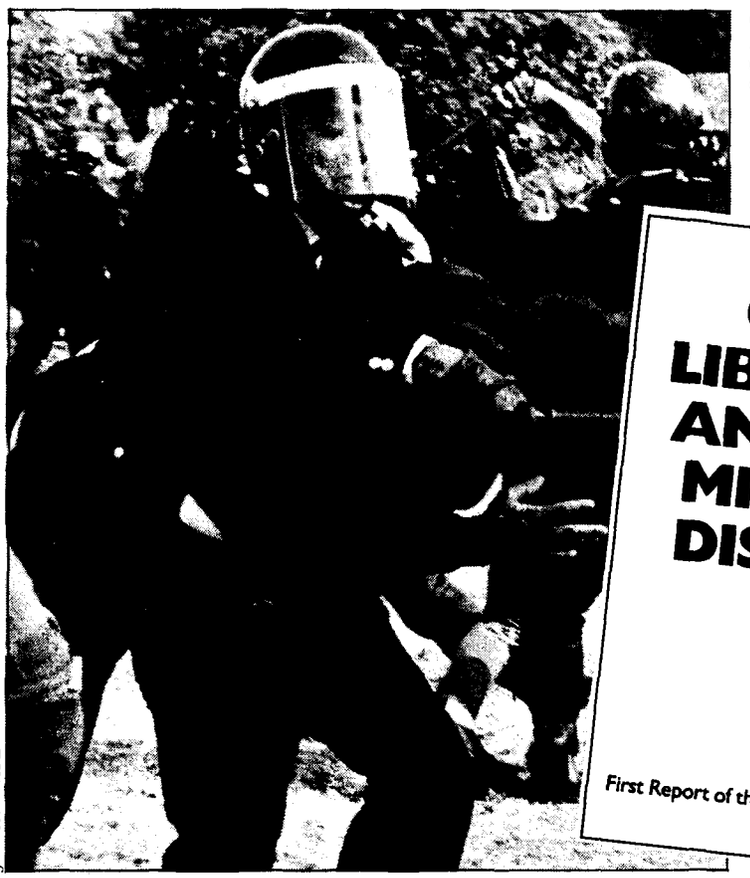
We do not live in a one crop moral economy. Liberty as a principle must often be modified by other principles — such as 'order', 'equal respect for others', 'welfare' etc, etc. Any list is contestable, but logically it is not contestable that liberty, since it can mean doing anything, must in practice be modified by other principles. None the less, if it is not a sufficient principle for social justice, it is a *necessary* one.

Socialists should not surrender either the word or the concept 'libertarian' because others use or misuse it. We are libertarians but also egalitarians. We argue that these concepts are not antithetical, but each a condition for the maximisation of the other. But we have no monopoly of 'liberty' and a purely socialist definition of liberty is, indeed, not merely unpersuasive to non-believers, but also, in its Leninist gloss (something only for the Party *now* and for everybody *afterwards*), pretty deadly within the ranks. It follows that insofar as we are talking about liberty as a necessary condition for social justice and not always talking about everything at once, we may need to make common cause with other defenders of liberty. And this will involve respecting their scruples as well as they ours.

The point had better be clear. I desperately hope that it will be in ten days time at the NCCL's aforesaid AGM.

They face two problems: (i) last year's AGM passed contradictory resolutions about advice that the office gave to a national organiser of the National Front; (ii) and a repudiation by their executive of parts of an independent report they commissioned, *Civil Liberties and the Miners' Dispute*, which said, in passing but firmly and clearly, that the right to work is as real as the right to strike and that there was some violence on both sides. Emergency resolutions will be debated *pro* and *con*.

The context and national importance of the problem is this: the NCCL has had its ups and downs and identity crises over the years. For a long period in the 1940s it became a Communist-dominated body, until its discrimination in choosing cases and ineptitude in defending them stirred up a sleeping liberal-minded membership. At times their actions had seemed more concerned to 'expose the system' and make martyrs than to get their clients off.



John Harris/IFL

Orgreave, June 1984, and the report that sparked off the controversy

Then followed a period of rather boring but effective rectitude in which cases seemed to be picked to establish some point of law important for civil liberties in general. The late 1960s and 1970s saw, however, a more campaigning mood take over: that the NCCL should act positively on society, not just negatively in support of individuals. Much of this 'positive' action was, like much 'student politics' of the period, little more than passing resolutions at AGMs and getting 'your people' on the committee. Yet successive secretaries have seen the folly of letting the NCCL get branded as a purely left-wing pressure group, however broad that Left, and have waged running battles with those members who want to capture all such bodies for an ideologically correct position.

More recently a new secretary, Larry Gostin, has made great efforts to give the NCCL a 'crossbench' image. He has succeeded in getting an all-party Parliamentary Civil Liberties Group set up with a Tory chair and Labour and Liberal vice-chairs. During the committee stages of the Data Protection Bill and the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill the NCCL was able to brief MPs of all parties. This year an article in *The Times* by a Liberal MP and a letter from a Tory MP have both endorsed the credentials of the NCCL as the leading bi-partisan or crossbench advocate of civil liberties. Perhaps too soon.

TOO MUCH HAS been made of the personality of Larry Gostin, both his energy and his commitment to broadening the composition and image of the body. The tendency was that way, or else he would not have been appointed. But two events have stirred up strong political passions.

Last year's AGM passed this resolution by 175 to 151 votes with 11 absentions:

> In view of recent publicity given to reports of NCCL advising the National Front and one of its leaders, the NCCL reaffirms its total commitment to opposing racism, which infringes the rights and liberties of racial minorities. This AGM accordingly resolves that NCCL should not knowingly aid organisations and individuals . . . whose objectives are opposed to civil liberties within a multi-racial society.

But they also, by 160 to 132 with 33 abstentions, endorsed:

> . . . the action reported in the *Guardian* of 22 March 1984 of NCCL's staff in giving advice to citizens who believe they have suffered infringements of their civil liberties without first requiring them to establish that their views and activities are acceptable to the NCCL.

Hard cases must make good law. Other people's

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liberties are sent to test us not to please us. Here is a test case for anyone who takes civil liberties seriously — and thus is to be trusted with the potential exercise of power. Though racism is morally abominable, and though the National Front is racist, yet they must be given *advice* if they think that their civil liberties for actions under the law have been infringed.

No organisation can take advance decisions on its moral and resource priorities. But to say that no aid of any kind, even including advice as to the law, should be given to organisations 'opposed to civil liberties' is to invite ultimately oppressive definitions of permissible 'civil liberties'. The paradox of the awkward, unruly dog called liberty is that if you put a collar on it, it ceases to be a dog called liberty.

The other case is simpler, even if the political implications are more immediately worrying. *Civil Liberties and the Miners' Dispute* was asked to look at the role of the police. Overwhelmingly it is about the role of the police, and has many very important criticisms, particularly of their use of discretionary powers; and of the behaviour of the Metropolitan Police on, as it were, safari.

It is a very thoughtful and balanced report: 'Contrary to the impression inevitably created by the Media . . ., *most* of the picketing during the strike has been orderly and on a modest scale'. But it dared to say: 'that freedom not to take part in a strike is as much a fundamental right as the right to strike', and to end with a plea that: 'All those involved in the strike and the police operations should . . . refrain from violence or intimidation . . .'.

Such a balanced report was it that the *Sun*, the *Mail* and the *Express* presented it as supporting the police — 'surprise accolade . . . by Council of Civil Liberties, a Left-wing pressure group backed by the unions' (*Express*); and by the *Mirror* and the *Guardian* as criticising the police widely and deeply. The *Police Review* for 14 December was magnificent: it had a fierce editorial: 'Selective Reporting', abusing the report, but also a full-page article by Brian Hilliard, the Deputy Editor, giving a very fair summary of its conclusions and discussing sensibly the principal criticisms (he seemed to quote their remarks on 'the Met' with some *schadenfreude*).

But at the end of February the NCCL's executive by a vote of 11 to 5 regretted that the inquiry had 'exceeded its terms of reference' (we've heard that before!) 'in commenting on the conduct of striking and working miners' and said that the presentation of report 'obscured its positive recommendations and was unnecessarily damaging to the miners' cause'.

Suppose it was damaging to the miners' cause, that is the striking miners' cause. The libertarian can only reply, whether of Left, Right or Centre, *so what?* If the NCCL did lapse back from being a body skilled in defending general civil liberties in the courts into being just a socialist pressure group, something else with the limited clear role would have to be put in its place. And, if it did come to that, as I passionately hope it won't, democratic socialists must be active in the refounding, and show themselves able to work with all libertarians. The British labour movement no longer deserves, or should endure, the reputation that to be left-wing is to be intolerant. □

CIVIL LIBERTIES 2

LAW AND CONSCIENCE

Andrew Lumsden previews the NCCL battleground

TIMELY WARNINGS such as Bernard Crick's above, or the *Sunday Times* banner headline of 31 March 'NCCL split over picket violence', may yet of course have a defusing effect. There may be more fudge than blood on the floor of ULU (University of London Union) ten days from now when NCCL completes the first AGM of its second half-century.

It would benefit its finances if there were. GLC aid to NCCL (£83,000 in 1984-85, or about 20 per cent of its dispersible funds) is almost certainly on the way out and the perennial NCCL deficit is expected to be much higher this year than the £30,000 budgeted for 1984. No national trade union has threatened — yet — to disaffiliate from NCCL, and indeed head offices are described as having been 'scrupulous', during recent tensions, about not

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Larry Gostin: quotes Martin Luther King

'applying pressure'. But local trades union branches and trades councils are potentially another matter.

Administration isn't, to put the matter gently, a strong suit of the NCCL's these days. Recruitment of an office administrator has been agreed in principle by the Executive Committee, subject to negotiations with staff (which are going painfully, such is the alarm in an organisation of collective spirit about construction of a management hierarchy). There aren't, accordingly, any hard figures from which to make financial predictions. But cancellation of membership subscriptions and special contributions by trades union affiliates and/or individual members unable to tolerate the 'pure' line on advice, on closed shops, and on enquiries such as the one into the policing of the miners' strike, would on anyone's guess make the funding burden heavier than it is already.

So presumably would the departure of Gostin, if things swung that way after the voting on 27-28 April. He very properly re-iterates only that he'll carry out the policies mandated by the executive. But too much repetition either of such votes as the EC's 28 February reproof to the interim report on the policing of the miners' strike as 'unnecessarily damaging to the miners' cause', or the 1984 AGM resolution that NCCL should never in any circumstances provide legal advice to persons known to be involved in unacceptable — eg racist — organisations, could and should cumulatively lead to his packing it in.

His departure, if things were to come to that pass, would have to signal the end of, or at least a violent setback to, the current NCCL effort to widen the membership (and with it the financial) base. Since he became general secretary (end-1983) individual membership has gone up from some 6,000 to 10,000, largely thanks to the *Liberty Campaign* of 1984, timed to gain maximum publicity from NCCL's 50th anniversary. Target, *pro tem*: 20,000.

Anyone, more or less, could launch such an attempted revolution in the scale of involvement of 'ordinary people' in NCCL activities. But available models suggest that only a general secretary (and EC in association with resolutions passed in AGM) who extrovertedly show that the NCCL's legal officers, 22 staff, and powers of rousing a public storm are *not* subordinated to any narrow definition of Left-wing or organised labour objectives — eg perhaps to such a definition as is implied in Brent trades council's emergency resolution 2 that 'this agm believes that individual rights are won and maintained through collective action' — will have a chance in real-life England and Wales[1] of transforming NCCL membership and income.

The prime model to hand is CND, which within the last fortnight has for the first time become an affiliate member of NCCL, following the joint work dealing with Cathy Massiter's *20/20 Vision* demonstrations of M15 interference with both organisations. It seems that there are people and money to be mobilised for 'liberty' under flag-carriers who are perceived to be selflessly pro-individual rather than 'sectarian' — party-political or class-based.

Gostin (describing him as a type, rather than trying to place excessive stress on him as an individual) was deeply impressed, as a native American, by such leadership when personified in Martin Luther King, whom he knew, though not closely. Asked to produce something of his own philosophy about the struggle with oppressive law or judicial/administrative practice, and how it is to be waged, he cites King: 'I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law'.

Tending towards the same concept, of laws that the law itself as well as individuals and organisations should seek to obey, is the scarring he received when he saw the ferocity of the consequences which befell some of his student friends in the '60s when they opted for violent action against institutionalised racism. The inclusion of assertions that violence and threats against working miners by striking

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If we need a co-ordinated policy for transport here...

While favouring the retention of the County Councils to plan and co-ordinate their own transport facilities on a regional basis, the Government is bent on abolishing the GLC.

It recognises the need for London-wide transport planning, but seeks to take this task on itself. London Transport has already been hived off to a Government-controlled quango. Now the Government proposes that the Whitehall-planned trunk road network should be extended. Whitehall will also control traffic operation on a further 300 miles of main road, and will give *mandatory* guidance on traffic schemes on all other roads.

The prime reason for change put forward by the Government – greater and more

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immediate local democracy – is, thus, a hypocritical sham. The vitally important link between public transport and traffic planning will be broken. Londoners will have no direct say in how money provided by them for transport will be spent.

Highway and traffic planning on all but the strategic network will be divided amongst 33 boroughs, so there will be no consistent policies or initiatives.

Not surprisingly, the Government has no coherent argument to support its proposals. They are recipes for jam that Londoners will have to swallow if the Abolition Bill becomes law.

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miners were 'more common' than the reverse, and are to be condemned, in the 10 December miners' strike policing report, is of a piece with Gostin's own route to the NCCL.[2]

So, though he rejects accusations that he'd like to see NCCL move to the extreme libertarian position of the American Civil Liberties Union (which notoriously once fought on grounds of the sanctity of free speech for the rights of neo-Nazis to march) it is Gostin's declared wish (over-turned in 1984 AGM but up for voting again this year) that legal officers shouldn't be totally prohibited from advising members of racist organisations on their rights when it isn't in furtherance of their racism. The distinction is admittedly hard to make (and a minuscule fragment of NCCL's ever-likely case-load). But was Harrington entitled to be taught at the North London Poly? Gostin: 'He had rights'.

Catherine ('Cash') Scorer, a key figure on the middle-to-hard-Left end of the EC (together with Bill Birtles and Chris Darke) is proposing a motion ten days from now which if approved should reinforce a shift towards a far more 'rainbow' effect in the NCCL public profile. The EC would be instructed, if the motion passes, to consider creating an advisory council to the EC, an honorary president and vice-president of NCCL, and a body of sponsors: 'the purpose of any such structure, to show the breadth of support for NCCL in order to encourage affiliations and membership'.

It isn't necessary to look very far for the sort of names which might be found clustering round NCCL later this year. The signatories who were rounded up for the 'golden age of liberty' letter to *The Times* on 22 February 1984, commemorating to the day the 50th anniversary of the founding of NCCL, included Trevor Huddleston, Bruce Kent, E.P. Thompson; Glenda Jackson, Dora Russell, Michael Foot, Lord Avebury. Another motion for this year's AGM (proposer, Geoffrey Robertson) would commit NCCL to supporting introduction of the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic UK law — there's another gamut of possible names in the lobby for European Convention incorporation. The all-party Parliamentary Civil Liberties group, re-established this year after NCCL lobbying, offers another 'great and good' catchment area (chair: Geoffrey Rippon — Conservative). A major trades union figure would certainly be sought.

In a letter of resignation from the EC some four months ago, John Bennett, self-described as 'somewhere between a dry Liberal and wet Tory' (and as 'honest' by a socialist long-term activist in the NCCL), wrote both that the existing EC has 'a significant Labour/Union majority', and complained that 'heavily dependent on union funding' the NCCL has perforce had actions and priorities against its own 'long-term interests'.

Echoes of the Labour Party and the political levy, and of the same kind of question that Anna Coote raised in the *NS* on 1 March — 'Might losing union funding do the Labour party good?', will be ricocheting round NCCL at ULU at the end of this month. And they will be no easier to answer. □

1. Scotland has its own council for civil liberties.
2. Gostin was one of the six-person panel on the enquiry.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS

GOING BACK TO GAS

Duncan Campbell reports that Mrs Thatcher's desire to re-arm with nerve gas echoes earlier Tory enthusiasm

IN GENEVA, where almost 60 years ago the first international Protocol against poison gases was drafted, diplomats and scientists at the Conference on Disarmament are still negotiating a complete global ban on chemical weapons. But their time is running out and if progress is not made, options for placing nerve gas stocks in Britain, either by producing nerve gas here, or bringing over American 'binary' bombs are under serious study in Whitehall.

Historically, Britain has had a love-hate relationship with these grotesque weapons. Now, in the first of a series of special studies by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), British public records scholar Andy Thomas has unearthed previously unreported official documentation which casts considerable light on Whitehall's real attitude to the gas bomb.*

Proponents of nuclear deterrence have long asserted that the chemical weapons standoff between the two sides in World War II is a compelling argument that the theory works. During six years of an all-out European war, mutual chemical deterrence was maintained.

Thomas shows clearly that this argument is entirely illusory. Each side prepared in great detail to use gas and, despite the Geneva Protocol, planned specific military contingencies for its first use. In addition, it has long been known that the Italians gas-bombed Abyssinia. Thomas's new evidence shows that the Japanese mounted repeated chemical attacks on China. His research also reveals that Britain experimented with airborne gas warfare against the Soviet Union, during the 1919 expedition against the Bolsheviks — the first ever use of air delivered gas weapons.

During 1940, the RAF prepared to use chemical warfare first in two well defined contingencies — if an invasion of Britain was mounted, or if aerial warfare seriously demoralised the civilian population. In these circumstances, Britain planned to use gas, either against invasion troops and airfields, or against German cities. Gas bombs were stockpiled at 36 RAF bases, and in nearby 'ammunition parks' and gas filling centres.

British willingness to contemplate the use of chemical weapons was revealed in a secret memorandum from the then War Minister in May 1919: 'I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes. The moral effect should be so good'. The Secretary of State added that:

> the loss of life should be reduced to a minimum. It is not necessary to use only the most deadly gases; gases can be used which cause great inconvenience and would spread a lively terror...

The author of these lively notes was Mr Winston Churchill. He had displayed enthusiasm for gas since the Dardanelles campaign in 1915, when he wanted to gas the Turks. Later that year he wanted to use gas in Egypt. In May 1919, he wanted to gas the Afghans, but the India Office strongly objected. He finally got his way in Russia, where he had noted on the file that 'I should very much like the Bolsheviks to have it [poison gas]'. Britain attacked the Bolsheviks in September 1919, sending the RAF on 11 raids to drop over 500 gas bombs on the Red Army near Archangel.

British civilians might have fared little better than some of the inferior enemy, according to Home Defence Plan Y, prepared in November 1941. The RAF planned to counter invading forces by gas bombing the entire coastal strip of Kent, raiding 20 targets spread from Broadstairs to Dungeness. Far Eastern command's chemical weapons planner, Major-General Lethbridge, also in 1943 urged a major CW attack on Japanese forces, which:

> must be administered wth complete ruthlessness and upon a vast scale, employing a mixture of chemical agents that will not only cause mutilation and death, but by their very diversity of effect create terror and panic in the minds of their victims.

In Algeria, before and during World War II, and in Nigeria after the war, Thomas reveals that France and Britain operated secret chemical test ranges. No one knows what environmental health perils may have been created by the secret construction of these ranges during the 1930s and 1950s.

During the war, a chain of British factories, run mainly by ICI, turned out thousands of tons of mustard and other gases. Chief among them were Rocksavage, Sutton Oak and Randle, all near Runcorn on the Mersey; Rhydymwyn near Mold in Flintshire; Springfields near Preston; and Roydmills at Huddersfield. After VE-day, their managers wrote volumnious factory histories to inform later governments how to get back into production on gas bombs. Later, many of the special chemical weapons production and storage sites moved on to new roles in the nuclear era, with one — the giant underground tunnels at Rhydymwyn — being designated for a period as one of the emergency citadels for central government.

In occupied Germany after the war, teams from Porton Down eagerly sought the Nazi scientists who had experimented with nerve gas on human victims — not in order to advise on retribution, but to gain 'invaluable data as to lethal considerations for man'. No weapon can ever be called humane or reasonable — but this account illustrates the special ugliness of chemical warfare. □

* Andy Thomas, *Effects of Chemical Warfare: A selective review and bibliography of British state papers*, published by SIPRI, Stockholm; and Taylor and Francis Ltd, London.

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MERSEYSIDE

SOGAT OFFICIAL SACKS ACCUSERS

Jane Leighton reports on allegations of irregularities

IT'S BARELY a week since Brenda Dean, the first woman to head a major British trade union, took over from Bill Keys as the general secretary of the print workers' union, SOGAT 82. But already she's embroiled in a crisis which threatens to tear the Merseyside branch apart and which could seriously impair her reputation.

Two thousand members, nearly half the Merseyside branch, have withheld their union subscriptions for the past five months. They're supporting a call for a full meeting of the membership. They want to hear details of allegations against their full-time branch secretary, Arnie Martin, and they want to hear his response to those claims. But Martin has refused to call the meeting. Instead, all those who've been withholding their subs have been told they will lose their union membership unless they pay up by the end of the week.

The sanction has already been applied to more than 100 union members. They have all had their had their cards withdrawn for non-payment and it's expected they'll be joined by hundreds more. The strength of feeling is an indication of the seething discontent which has accompanied Martin's six years in office.

The present emergency centres on Martin's decision to sack four women who had all worked closely with him in the Merseyside branch office. Marion Elliott, Denise Parr, Susannah Spencer and Dawn Howard were all sacked for gross misconduct last November. They had made a series of complaints against Martin to the then general secretary elect, Brenda Dean.

The women alleged that Martin was guilty of financial irregularity and, in several letters to Dean, pleaded with her to agree to a confidential meeting with them to discuss the running of the Merseyside office. They felt they could not make formal complaints to Martin about Martin because they were 'fearful of our positions within the branch office . . . because of the vindictive attitude of the branch secretary'.

Dean overruled the women's concern. She told them she would ask Martin himself to settle the dispute. In effect she was asking Martin to investigate himself. However, Dean did reassure the women about their job security. She told them 'You could not be dismissed simply because you made a complaint about the internal running of the branch'. Within three months all the women had been sacked.

When Dean sent Martin the documents she'd received from the women he took immediate action. He demoted two of the women — the head bookkeeper and his personal secretary — and instructed all four to appear before a branch committee. When the women went on strike and called for a full meeting of the membership he sacked them.

Mercury Press

Arnie Martin: hiding behind his coat or clutching it for comfort?

In December the women appeared before the branch committee. Martin was present, as were three committee members implicated by the women's allegations. Martin's decision to sack the four women was upheld. All four women told the committee they hadn't been given a fair bearing. Their allegations were never considered. The allegations were also ruled out of order by the union's National Executive Committee which confirmed the sackings at an appeal in January 1985.

ALTHOUGH THE union ruled the allegations out of order, the commercial branch of Merseyside Police is now investigating.

In particular police are looking at claims that:

- Martin ordered his bookkeeper to alter the cashbook. Two pages were torn out and rewritten to conceal weekly payments to a contractor.
- Martin employed non-union labour and friends to carry out building work at the branch office. This is contrary to a Merseyside branch resolution. The men were paid £4,000 on petty cash vouchers.
- An assistant secretary misused the SOGAT petrol account.

The sacked women have in their possession the pages torn from the cash book, photocopies of all the petty cash receipts and a signed statement from a petrol station employee. They argue that only a full investigation will resolve their allegations. Brenda Dean maintains the documentation does not substantiate allegations of criminal irregularity, although the women's primary concern is union propriety and democracy, rather than criminal offences.

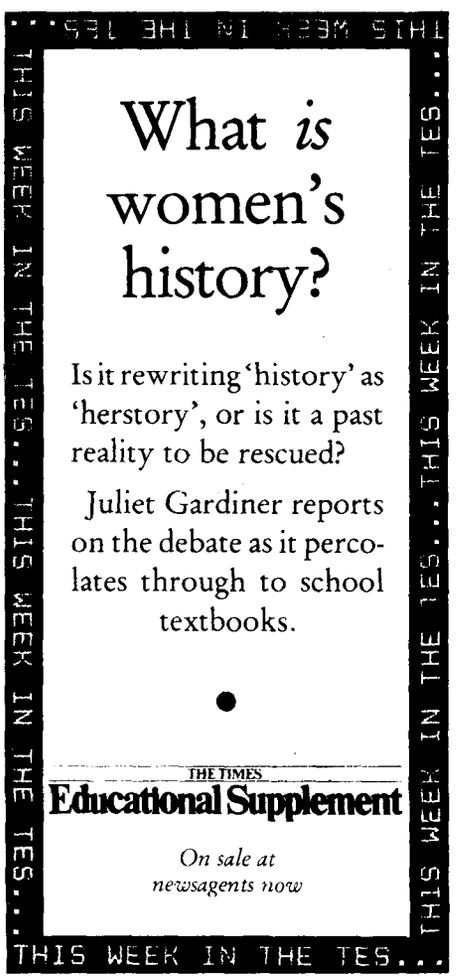
The women now await an industrial tribunal to hear their claim for wrongful dismissal. They were denied unemployment benefit for 12 weeks because Martin claimed they were sacked for being on a picket line. And because Martin had established the unusual habit of paying himself and his office staff three months wages in advance, the women have been ordered to repay the SOGAT branch these wages — between £400 and £500 each.

Meanwhile a campaign for a full members' meeting is gathering support. Last December an advertisement in the *Liverpool Echo,* the local evening paper, attracted 400 members to a campaign launch. Since then, more support has come from much of the Merseyside labour movement, including other SOGAT chapels, other trade unions, trades councils and the Liverpool District Labour Party.

BUT EVEN the campaign has become a controversial issue within SOGAT. There are claims of victimisation against those who've backed the women's strategy and allegations that the union leadership on Merseyside has used its muscle to avoid adverse press coverage by the *Liverpool Echo.*

Jim Wilson, the Father of Chapel at a local printing firm, supported the women's call for a meeting of the membership. He has been expelled by the branch committee from the union for refusing to cross the women's picket line and lost his position as president of the Merseyside branch. The new president is Eddie Kirkpatrick, a SOGAT member who works at the *Liverpool Echo.*

Kirkpatrick has stated that he has had articles vetted before they've been published by the paper. His claims of editorial influence were tape recorded at a meeting of the union's national executive. At the same meeting Martin himself said he had spoken with the *Echo's* editor about coverage of the dispute. The editor of the *Echo,* Chris Oakley, says he has never met or spoken with Martin. But the women insist they've been unable to get a fair press hearing. When Martin's new personal secretary and companion, Tracey Abbott, supported her boss in a letter published by the *Echo,* the women's immediate reply was never printed. Oakley


What *is* women's history?
Is it rewriting 'history' as 'herstory', or is it a past reality to be rescued?
Juliet Gardiner reports on the debate as it percolates through to school textbooks.
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himself says the paper has published four news stories and a feature. No feature was printed.

The women aren't the only people who have made allegations against Martin's running of the branch and who have ended up sacked. A branch official, Frank King, and an office manager, Charlie Cottrell, were expelled from the union after making serious allegations against Martin. Cottrell also lost his job but last month won an industrial tribunal against unfair dismissal.

Cottrell's and King's most serious claim centres on a payment by the Bowater Mersey Mill to SOGAT's Merseyside branch. The company handed over £8,668 to pay the full union contribution for 700 workers made redundant when the mill closed (TGWU members accepted a similar offer). The contributions were essential if the men were to claim union unemployment benefit.

In fact, the money was not used to pay the members' contributions. King and Cottrell complained, but a hearing by a NEC sub-committee found their complaints not proven and found them guilty of making false accusations. An appeal against that decision is pending. But for SOGAT the bald fact remains that the money was not used for the purpose intended and remains in branch funds. The 700 redundant Bowater Mill workers had to pay their union contributions themselves. The commercial branch of Merseyside Police is also investigating this matter.

Martin has been unavailable for comment and has failed to respond to my phone messages. Dean maintains that the previous enquiry cleared up the complaints on Merseyside. She points to the fact that one of the sacked women, Marion Elliott, in her evidence to the National Executive during the Cottrell-King hearing, said she was satisfied with the running of the branch. Elliott says she was too scared at the time to speak out. She feared she would lose her job.

Martin's period in office has seen an unprecedented period of strife in the Merseyside branch. Controversy began when, contrary to union rules at the time, he negotiated his own voluntary redundancy payment with his employer to take up the post as branch secretary in 1978. The ballot which won him the job was also challenged, by the former branch president, Jim Wilson, unsuccessfully. The returning officer rejected 200 ballot forms from one chapel for appearing to be in the same handwriting but ruled this would not have changed the result.

While the former office staff and union officials await appeals against wrongful dismissal and expulsion from the union, the SOGAT chapels are reaffirming their support for a full members' meeting. The rules require branches of more than one thousand members to hold delegate meetings but members' meeting on Merseyside are not unique. The branch held them over the closure of the Bowater Mill, the 40-hour week and the amalgamation with NATSOPA.

Meanwhile, Brenda Dean has told chapels that there is no appeal against loss of union membership for non-payment of contributions. But general president, Danny Sergeant, appears to be in two minds. At the beginning of April he granted one chapel the right of appeal. This week he withdrew that offer. □

PRIVATISATION

SELLING THE NEW TECH

John Rentoul on what really lay behind the deal between the Post Office and the Union of Communication Workers

DESPITE THE HYPERBOLE about a 'historic' agreement, the deal struck by management and union leaders on 2 April after a 24-hour walk-out at Mount Pleasant sorting office was between parties with a common interest. Management and workers face the same external threats: a privatising government, and new technology.

In return for a cash bonus and 55 to 75 per cent of productivity savings, the leadership of the Union of Communication Workers is prepared to accept postcode-reading machines, more part-timers, loss of overtime and detailed monitoring of work.

The government is, in fact, not (yet) serious about selling off the bulk of the Post Office's business, the mail service. But many of the 'secondary' services, like the National Girobank, parcels and counters, could be hived off separately (see box opposite).

Norman Tebbit threatened to suspend the Post Office's monopoly of letter post during the Mount Pleasant dispute. But the government is not enthusiastic about this option as a permanent measure; it would allow private operators to 'cream off' the profitable business traffic between large cities and leave the government subsidising the rest and footing a huge redundancy bill.

On the other hand, wholesale privatisation à la Telecom is not an option either, before the next election. There are a lot of other major stock exchange flotations in the queue and the Post Office is not an attractive package to the City if its flotation is accompanied by the abolition or relaxation of the monopoly.

The Post Office has not, therefore, featured on official 'shopping lists' in the government's privatisation programme — the ending of the monopoly is only used as a recurring threat to keep the Union of Communication Workers in line. Even among the pressure groups of the free-market Right, Post Office privatisation does not feature prominently. The two main proponents are Professor Michael Beesley and Ian Senior — both of whom have a direct interest in advocating the privatisation of the Post Office, because they are the obvious choices as consultants for the job.

Beesley was commissioned by the Department of Industry in 1980 to study the question of 'liberalising' British Telecom's network monopoly. He concluded that 'there should be no restriction on the freedom to offer services over BT's network'.

Senior is a director of Economists Advisory Group Ltd, a consultancy offering government departments and agencies those sort of services. With another disciple of the Austrian free-market economist Friedrich Hayek, Professor Stephen Littlechild, Beesley wrote an article in the July 1983 *Lloyds Bank Review* urging the privatisation of 80 per cent of the public sector, including the National Coal Board, British Rail, the Central Electricity Generating Board — and the Post Office. The article argued that the Post Office should eventually be split up into regional franchises diversifying into a range of non-post services.

UPP

Alan Tuffin: a persuasive performance?

Senior, a Liberal Party member, wrote a pamphlet for the free-market Institute of Economic Affairs in 1983 called 'Liberating the Letter', and contributed much of the section on the Post Office in the Adam Smith Institute's 'Omega' report on communications, published last year. The far right Adam Smith Institute serves a 'kite-flying' function for ideas that are otherwise not even considered. The Treasury consultative document on powers to privatise

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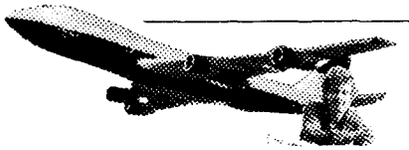
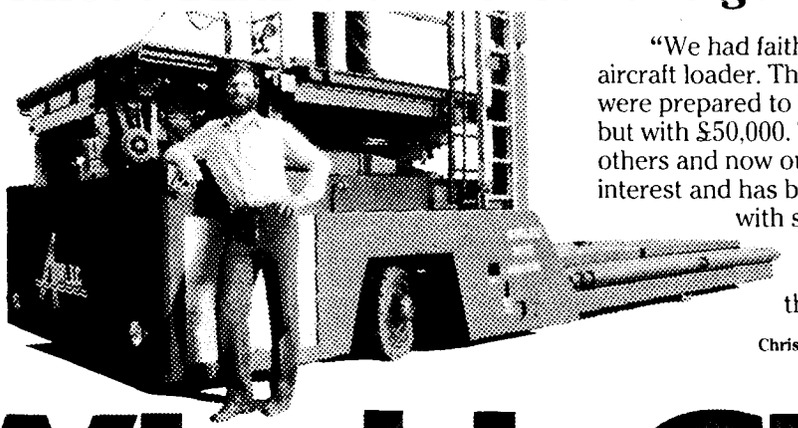


"Without GLEB we'd never have got off the ground"



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Chris Ross, M.D. Airlec

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"GLEB provided the perfect recipe for growth"

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Mrs. Manju Karia, M.D. Binisa Foods

"We had the capacity – GLEB provided the rest"

"When GLEB acquired recession-hit T.R. Creighton they not only saved the last foundry in London – they saved 75 jobs. Now through an expansionist programme financed by the Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, and vigorous marketing, we can provide more jobs and take our place as a force in heavy ferrous and lighter non-ferrous casting. We always had the capacity – GLEB provided the rest".

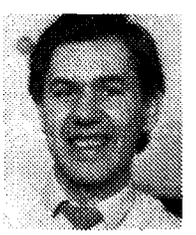
Tony Brookes, M.D. Essex Foundry

"The EEC put its money behind this GLEB high-tech scheme"

"Women have been ignored for too long in the world of information technology. That's why the GLEB launched this training course for women microelectronic technicians, based at the London New Technology Network in Camden. The EEC saw the scheme's value for women and joined the Greater London Training Board in providing financial backing".

Joy Tasker, Course Instructor

"With GLEB's help we can now win a whole new range of contracts"



"We had more print orders than we could cope with. Our turnover had increased five fold in 3 years, but most Banks are simply not interested in providing the sort of development capital that co-ops need. Luckily, GLEB have a less blinkered, longer term view. Their loan of £200,000 meant we could install a four-colour press, treble our workforce and win a whole new range of contracts".

Tom Reed, Administrator, Lithosphere

"We're working for ourselves. It's a marvellous feeling"

"When our previous employer moved to Crawley, 100 of us couldn't move home. That meant redundancy. Then the GLEB acquired the 2.5 acre site – and saved our jobs. The new London Production Centre will provide units for London's electronics industry. That will mean 400 jobs when the space is let. Now we are working here in new companies the GLEB has set up through London Production Centre Ltd. And, through a workers' trust, we share in running them. It's a marvellous feeling. We can really achieve something for ourselves, and we are doing our best to make it work".

Ivy Crook, Production Worker, London Production Centre

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nationalised industries, issued just before Christmas (*New Statesman*, 1 March 1985), was the first time the Post Office appeared on an official list of possible candidates. Professor Beesley is now 'doing some work for the Post Office', although neither he nor the PO is prepared to say what it is.

THE THREAT FROM new technology taking over services traditionally supplied by the Post Office comes principally from the Post Office's own ugly duckling, British Telecom, from which it was separated in 1981. Ian Senior wrote in last winter's issue of *Economic Affairs*:

> Now the entire concept of postal mechanisation has been overtaken by the march of technology. The concept of transmitting information on a physical piece of paper which must be laboriously moved from sender to addressee has been superseded almost overnight by the electronic letter.

He points out that 'already 2½ million homes in the UK have a personal computer'. While this vision of a computer in every British home communicating on telephone lines is still a long way off, there's no doubt that *business* demand for the traditional letter will decline. More immediately, new technology also threatens internal change in the Post Office. One Optical Character Recognition machine (at the centre of the Mount Pleasant dispute), for instance, cuts out 12 jobs. Here it appears that management and workforce have different interests.

But the leaders of the Union of Communication Workers (UCW), which represents 80 per cent of the workforce, regard change as necessary, and have set out to control rather than oppose it. UCW General Secretary Alan Tuffin says: 'I recognise that the best defence is attack; the postal business has got to go out and sell itself. So far, new technology like facsimile transmission and computerised mailshots has generated a lot of business.'

The UCW, however, has a very devolved and democratic structure, and its leadership does not have the authority to negotiate without reporting back to delegate conferences. This must heighten suspicion that the much-heralded 2 April agreement was an exercise designed in conjunction with management to link new technology in the minds of UCW members with more money. The emphasis on 'resolute' management serves also to impress the government, and to make clear to UCW members that they only have two choices — to fight on shaky ground, or to take the deal on offer.

The key issue is now whether UCW conference on 19-24 May will accept the whole package: the sticking point will be the introduction of more part-time workers to replace voluntary overtime. This is related to new technology because it will increase management control over working time, along with new work measurement technology. Tuffin will have to convince his members that he can negotiate proper training requirements and conditions for the part-time workers.

Machines that can read postcodes capture the public imagination, but the real savings are to made from three computerised monitoring systems, TRIPOS, LOCUM and DAISY, which will provide managers with detailed information on mail flows and enable them to deploy the workforce effectively.

This use of new technology to control the workforce, along with the arrival of new part-timers on 17 June (conference permitting) and the justified fears of de-skilling, will inevitably lead to industrial relations problems in on the shop floor of the Post Office. However, the UCW leadership has made clear its intention to avoid confrontation.

Paradoxically, both union and management find it serves their purpose to exaggerate the threat from the government. Although the government has no intention of selling off the Post Office wholesale (or carrying out its manifesto commitment to 'do something' about strikes in essential services), the spectre is being used to achieve rapid change. □

Post Office: the sell-off options

*Total Post Office turnover £3 billion in year to March 1984**

Letters: 64% of turnover
Makes a profit and hasn't been subsidised for eight years. The profit, £103 million in 1984, is enough to cover the 'negative external financing limit', a backdoor tax paid to the Exchequer which has been raised from £60 million to £70 million a year. These are not significant sums in terms of keeping the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement down, but provide the government with an incentive to retain the letters monopoly. However, the government took powers in the 1981 British Telecommunications Act to exclude individual services from the monopoly. Since then, express mail, charity Christmas card delivery and certain business document services have been 'deregulated'.

Counter Services: 16% of turnover
The 22,700 post office counters make a £12 million profit, or 2% of their £500 million turnover. Over two fifths is Post Office business (23% mails, 16% National Girobank, 3% postal orders), but a third is DHSS work. National Savings, other government departments and British Telecom also use counters on an agency basis. Work is charged for under the Agency Services Agreement, which allows for a small profit on the cost of the service. In private hands, as regional or competing national networks, agency agreements could be renegotiated.

Inland Parcels: 10% of turnover
Already competes with private couriers, although it is the largest UK parcels carrier. Makes £19 million profit on a £300 million turnover (6%). Could be floated off as a separate company, although it uses many of the same overheads as the letters business.

National Girobank: 8% of turnover
Made a profit of £5.6 million in 1984, although the turnover figure (£227 million) is not so relevant in banking. Run as a separate operation, with segregated accounts, and claims to be charged a 'commercial' rate for use of postal and counter services. Even if the Posts business does defray some concealed costs, the 1½ million customers (and rising) would be very attractive to the private sector. The Girobank is highly computerised and employs a mere 5,000 staff.

**Includes £160 million of internal business between Posts (Mails and Counters) and National Girobank. If either were sold off, this figure would show in the accounts of both.*

LABOUR PARTY

EXPLOSIVE MATERIAL

Jolyon Jenkins and Arlen Harris on the collision of the black section issue with reselection

THE DAILY MAIL'S front page story on Monday — 'Kinnock Faces Race Rebellion' — is an indication that the Tories and their newspapers intend to extract as much political advantage as they can from the Labour Party's continuing disputes over black sections. At Walworth Road, though, officials were trying hard to play down the row. 'More of a misunderstanding, really,' claimed a press officer.

On 27 March the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) decided to take action over constituency parties that were pressing ahead with the selection of candidates with the participation of delegates from black sections. At present this is against the rules. The NEC formulated a three stage reprimand procedure for erring Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs): first a 'friendly memorandum' pointing out the rules, then a visit to the CLP from headquarters officials, and finally a demand from the NEC for a 'loyalty oath', if all else fails.

The 'loyalty oath' is in fact entirely cosmetic, because all party members have to accept the rules, constitution and policies of the party in writing before they join.

The attempt to avoid confrontation has misfired badly — the NEC's 'friendly memorandum' to Lewisham East was one factor which inflamed participants at Sunday's conference of black sections in Brixton. Delegates representing 24 parties that had already set up black sections voted to continue to take a hard line. Marc Wadsworth, one of the founders of Vauxhall black section and a prominent campaigner, told the *New Statesman*: 'The attitude of the NEC and the leadership symbolises all that is bad in the Labour Party at the moment.'

The situation is still unclear, as CLPs have different timetables for both selection and rule changing. Six CLPs are in conflict with the NEC by having changed or being in the process of changing their rules to allow black section delegates to participate in selection procedures. The parties are: Vauxhall, Lewisham East, Nottingham East, Deptford, Newham North-West and Hornsey and Wood Green. The latter, although changing the rules, will not allow black sections to participate in selection this time round. Three other CLPs — Westminster South, Streatham and Battersea — have changed the rules, but do not yet have formally constituted black sections. A number of other CLPs, mainly in London, have set up black sections, which is not in itself unconstitutional, but are so far confining themselves to offering moral support to the others, in the form of resolutions, and awaiting the outcome.

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THE DRIVE for black sections has gathered pace since the 1983 party conference, when a motion was proposed 'to give serious consideration to proposals for mandatory inclusion of disadvantaged groups . . . and to recognise in particular the rights of black members of the party to organise together in the same way as women's sections and young socialists' branches.'

The motion was remitted to the NEC for further consideration. The NEC set up a working party which produced a discussion document for the 1984 conference, and has since been working on specific proposals to put to this year's conference. The working party, which has equal numbers of black and white members, is expected to come out in favour of black sections with some constitutional rights at its crucial meeting on Thursday this week. Although some black activists doubt whether it will go so far as to propose black section participation in selection, black confidence in the sincerity of the working party to propose genuine reform has begun to increase.

There are two centres of power within Labour's black activist movement. The main power centre, the Labour Party black section national committee, grew out of the black sections' steering committee which was set up in June 1984. The committee is made up of one representative from each CLP black section. The other grouping is BLAC, the Black Activists Committee. This is much smaller, centred on London, and aims to act as an informal ginger group.

Support for black activism comes mainly from the Left, with *London Labour Briefing* and *Socialist Organiser* featuring prominently. Notably opposed to black sections is Militant, which favours traditional class-based struggle as the way to eradicate the party's racism.

Intimately bound up with the black sections issue is the determination of activists to get black members selected for safe or winnable seats. The ones to watch are: Brent South, Ealing Southall, Bow and Poplar, Bradford South — all safe seats — and Lewisham East, Leicester East and Nottingham East, which are marginals. To these Marc Wadsworth would add Slough, Bradford North and Cardiff Central, proving, he says, that black activism is not a purely London phenomenon.

Black activists are telling the party that it cannot count on the automatic support of the black vote in areas where an unsympathetic white candidate has been selected. Although less than 4 per cent of the total electorate is black, activists claim that 53 Labour MPs owe their seats to black voters. This is because the black vote is even more concentrated than the Labour vote usually is. Moreover, the seats in question are almost all marginal ones, and in 27 the black population is more than the Labour majority. This theoretically gives black voters a lot of power. But doubts have been expressed as to whether black people can be persuaded to vote as a bloc, in view of the fact that the 70 per cent of black voters who vote Labour do so for class as well as social reasons.

Nonetheless, in recent local by-elections the black vote does appear to have been mobilised, particularly in London where about ten new black councillors have been elected in the last year. A recruiting drive in Haringey succeeded in registering 10,000 new voters, many of them black. In other cases, black voters have shown themselves not always willing to vote for white Labour candidates. Moreover, the close attention the black press has been giving to the issues means that few black voters can be unaware of them. At this stage, all sides realise that the ability to bluff is all. □

This England

£3 book tokens for entries printed. (On postcards, please.)

□Mr Frederick Parsons, a barrister who claimed £320 on his insurance policy after a heron swooped on the pond at his home in St Agnes Road and made off with 57 of his 64 goldfish, yesterday lost his appeal against Avon Insurance's refusal to pay. The judge said goldfish were part of the animal kingdom and counted as livestock, not personal effects. — *The Times* (Simon Marks)

□The Wangford Arms landlord, Mr. Graham Newman, said 'I have never been against nudists. . . they will still be offered the best hospitality, but I would ask them to wear a tie.' — *Eastern Daily Press* (Mrs F. Donovan)

□No matter what your political persussion Coun. Jack Bethell's comment at the Darlington council committee yesterday was worth a giggle. Nigel Lawson, he asserted, was an anagram for the phrase: we all sign on. — *Northern Echo* (E. J. Bell)

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LOOKING FOR 'CONTENT'

Last year a pamphlet by five communists arguing for Left 'class politics' aroused considerable controversy. Here, one of its authors, Ben Fine, responds to the criticisms

MOST OF the response to our recently published pamphlet *Class Politics*,* has been favourable, possibly because we sought to dispute the pessimism of the 'newer Left', as we termed it. We argued that 'Thatcherism' should be seen as reflecting an intensification of class conflict against the background of Britain's peculiar economic decline rather than an unambiguous 'great moving right show'. As a result, there has been a polarisation of political strategy (most notably with the Tories) which makes occupation of the 'middle ground' as dangerous as it is seductive.

This leads us to argue for a strategy of pressing for traditional socialist objectives, such as public ownership, but in a changing and broadening context. An exciting prospect is opened up by the recognition of the potential of the intimate relation between class politics and the new forces and movements, peace and women, for example.

No doubt much of the newer Left would agree with some of this but would prefer to place it in an electoral strategy of seeking alliances as far to the right as is necessary in order to defeat Thatcherism (or worse) at the next election. Leaving aside the rights or wrongs of being obsessed with the strategy for the next election whilst the results of the last have to be combated, it is our contention that a left programme can win popular and electoral support. But it has to be fought for rather than deemed impossible even at this early stage.

In the context of the miners' strike, everybody, including Mrs Thatcher, believes that it proves them right. On the Left, no doubt, there will be one interpretation that sees the miners' militancy and tactics as beyond the grasp of rightward-shifted popular opinion.

Our interpretation is different. If the Labour leadership (and not just Kinnock) had thrown their full weight behind the miners from the outset, the result in the central coalfields, let alone more generally, would have been different and, perhaps even more important, have been drawn more rapidly to a conclusion. The corollary would have been to lend credibility to a whole new range of economic policies concerning nationalised industries, energy and employment. The irony is that Labour's response has created the results most feared — conceding the popular to the Tories and the role of 'natural' party of opposition to the Alliance.

Even those who disagree with this assessment would surely recognise that the miners' strike has posed the issue of class struggle in its sharpest form. The uneven support across and within the various trade unions does not correspond to any easy account of 'old' and 'new' unions. For example, the support given by NALGO compares in its different way with that from the railways and certainly finds the power stations wanting.

But the progressive role of such white collar unions does not invalidate the significance of a class analysis and politics. It points to its changing contours. In addition, the miners' strike has brought broader (and not thereby classless) issues to the forefront, most notably of law and order and the role of women.

There is, after all, something almost surreal (or is it the British love of pantomime?) about the peers calling for one nation on the first live TV broadcast from the House of Lords, whilst miners chanting 'Coal not Dole!' in the gallery are carted off by the police. Meanwhile, through the looking glass into the lower chamber, left Labour MPs are reprimanded by Kinnock for a minor disruption in protest against their failure to obtain a debate on the strike.

BUT THE nature of class politics is not so clear-cut on the terrain chosen by the newer Left to support their strategic assessments, that of the new forces and the new movements. These do pose conflicts which are not reducible to sharply defined class issues.

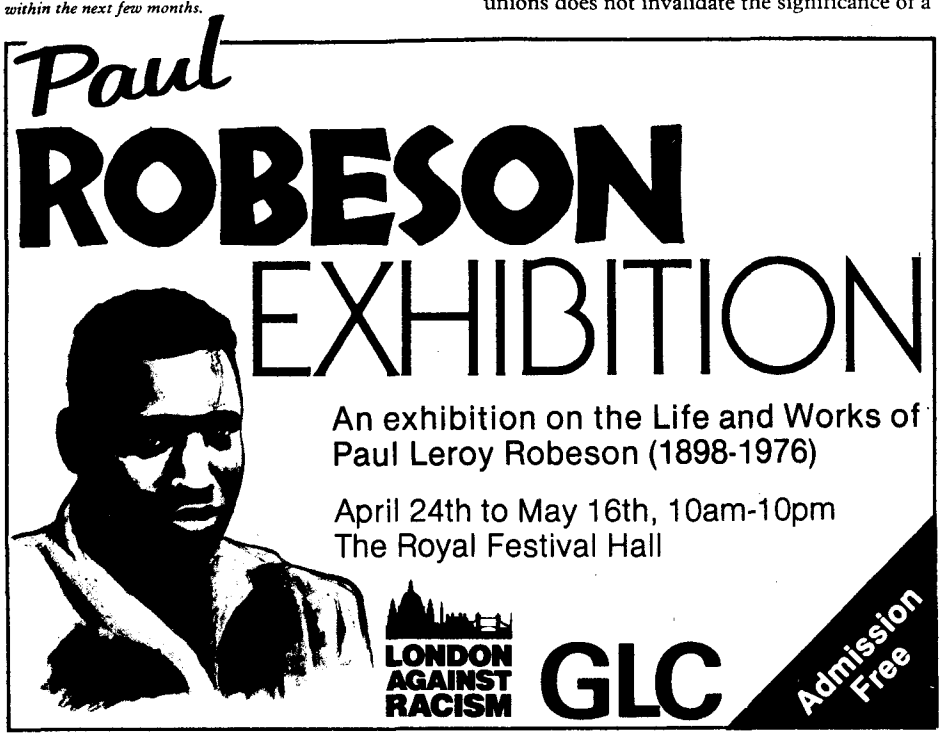
Here, we have met the least favourable reaction to our pamphlet but, equally, the least fair. For arguments about class politics are easily dismissed if they are misrepresented to the point of parody. To insist upon class politics is not to reduce every issue to the economic, nor even more absurdly to locate it at the immediate point of production. Nor is it to place exclusive reliance upon the traditional, male, white, manual trade unionists and to fail to recognise the changing composition of the workforce and trade union membership.

To all this we plead not guilty. We specifically point, in the pamphlet, to the explosive growth of trade union membership amongst white collar and women workers in the '70s and their unprecedented use of industrial action often against State policy and so with an implicit and often, at times, an explicit political content which called for further direction from the political arena itself.

But what stands out during this period is how little the Labour Party benefited from the growth of trade union membership. The reason is relatively simple. The Labour Party neither led nor supported the unions even in their limited conflicts against the loss of jobs and living standards in the crises of the seventies. For much of the time, it was even in opposition to the unions, thereby creating a labour movement far removed from socialist aspirations.

This was also a period of growth and fragmentation in the women's movement. We would argue, however, that both the greater fragmentation and the greater status of the women's movement illustrate the failure of the Labour Party to move forward, relating the movement's current demands to a class-based strategy. There was an over-reaction against traditional reluctance to take sexual politics seriously. Feminists were absolutely correct to insist upon the impossibility of reducing the complex totality of the economic, social and ideological oppression of women to the economic sphere alone. But once women's concerns are separated from the underlying economic base, then a plethora of contrary demands and interests can emerge. Equal opportunities at work, for example, all too easily becomes translated into improved access to senior management for a tiny minority of

*Class Politics: An Answer to Its Critics, *Ben Fine, Laurence Harris, Angela Weir and Elizabeth Wilson; now reprinted. The GLC's London Industrial Strategy is due to be published within the next few months.*



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women whilst their sisters continue to cater, clean and type as before.

HERE, HOWEVER, we wish to confront the issue of class politics at another point where it might be thought that our case is weakest: the GLC. This, like so many other 'buzz' concepts, such as Gramsci and Thatcherism, has become the one-line proof of the validity of the newer Left.

My experience at the GLC as a worker is entirely different. The politics of the GLC are intimately bound up with the politics of class.

Consider the London Industrial Strategy. It is an analysis of the London economy covering 20 or more sectors, from childcare to computer software. In each case, policy is put forward in terms of what the GLC could do as well as the campaigns and policies it would support at a national and even international level.

It is to be expected that this would bring the GLC smack up against the limits of its powers posed by central government. But what has proved as important as the freedom of manoeuvre of the GLC is the extent to which its own preferred policies are contingent upon national programmes of action. This, in turn, is not simply a question of the right policy at national level but of defeating the entrenched class interests of (multinational) capital.

In the energy sector, the GLC is committed to Combined Heat and Power, ie using the heat produced by generating power to heat buildings. This could only be part of a national scheme and its success would depend on comprehensive planning rather than the lead being taken by market forces. In telecommunications, the preservation of jobs and services for London depends on a reversal of the privatisation of British Telecom. Proposals for London's clothing sector rest on determined action to combat the racism experienced by sweated homeworkers who make up half the London workforce. For conversion (of military to civilian production), the GLC recognises the need for the co-ordination of public sector procurement of products of training and of the redeployment of skilled workers. And so the list could run on.

The relevant point about each of these sectoral strategies is that, with varying success, they reach deep into the trade union movement both for formulation, support and action whilst, equally, they have implications which go far beyond the 'economic' and result in popular 'non-economic' campaigns.

The GLC broaches the role of new forces and movements, and so has become a symbol of them and of new strategy. But this has not been at the expense of class politics. Rather the GLC could better be seen as a socialist intervention which prefigures a national strategy. There is a striking parallel with experiments of the old London County Council leader, Herbert Morrison, in municipal socialism and the influence they had on the socialism of the post-war Labour governments.

Morrison provided criteria and institutional forms for the future, pointers in retrospect for grander national schemes that could have been adopted or rejected according to the rhythms of conflict. The GLC might be viewed in a similar light. If we are to learn from its practice, the class content and action, as with the new forces generally, must remain at the forefront. □

Rehearsal for copy rites

Mandy Merck

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry has called for responses to its proposals for a levy on blank audio and video tapes by 30 April, and responses there have been in plenty. In the *Guardian*, Peter Fiddick characterised the DTI's Green Paper as a classic batch of bureaucratic fudge — levying far too little (an average of 10p on audio tapes, 25p on video tapes) to compensate the respective industries for home pirating, particularly after paying both the estimated royalties and the cost of distributing them (about £5 million altogether to each industry every year). As Fiddick noted, it's fun watching the Free Marketeers set ceilings on deals between copyright holders and tape manufacturers in order to restrain leisure industry inflation and consumer outrage. But this time you've got to feel some sympathy for the DTI.

Ever since mechanical reproduction multiplied the Mona Lisa, copyright has been an awfully complicated affair. Who is the author of the product being sold and how does he or she collect the royalties? Make that reproduction electronic and the hassles get exponential. What happens, the Green Paper muses to itself, when digital memory renders tape itself *de trop?* An equipment tax?

Yes please, says the International Federation of Phonogram and Videogram Procedures, who are lobbying for much higher levies alongsided the Motion Picture Association of America, the British Videogram Association, the British Phonogram Industry, etc, etc. Last year the British Phonogram Industry estimated the losses at £100 million for the manufacturers and £200 million for copyright holders. And when British film exhibitors gesture at the statistics on videos per UK household (the world's highest) they may be drowning rather than waving.

Yet in true Thatcherite style, this consultative document is directed at the concerns of the private owner of the film or music, not those of beleaguered arts or industries as a whole.

Defining just who holds what rights in, for example, a film produced for TV screening by a UK independent company, is where the thing gets tricky, and here the Green Paper becomes rather vague. The only sure thing is that when you tape the said movie on your home video it's unauthorised copying, and therefore illegal. (Although if you say you're only 'time-shifting' in order to see the broadcast on its single allotted occasion, you *may* have a defence.)

And how will they distribute the revenues on blank videotapes? Unlike audio copyright holders, who are organised into royalty collecting societies which distribute revenues on the basis of 'opportunities to record', such as radio and record sales, video rights owners lack established ground rules. They have no system for deciding what entitles them to payments or for collecting and distributing them. Nor are these rights undisputed: the Green Paper coincides with a big push by the Directors' Guild for a greater share of the rights largely divided between producers, scriptwriters, composers and designers.

The argument for greater recognition of film directors' rights is, of course, at least as old as the *auteur* theory that the director is the 'author' of the film. New media produce new possibilities for authorship. The movies brought in the storyboards and shooting scripts which directors now want to copyright and — producers take heed — protect against unreasonable changes. (Personally, I live for the day when print editors, surely the acknowledged *auteurs* of our age, get their share of the glory — and the royalties.) Given all the difficulties involved with video, even the Green Paper concludes that the most sensible solution might be the one the Government keeps opposing in amendments to the Films Bill — replacing the Eady subsidy to cinema production and training with one gathered through a videotape tax.

Then there are the problems presented by the combined fronts of Youth Culture and Post-Modernist Aesthetics, who have made the re-editing of 'found' objects, like a reggae ten-inch or a face cream commercial, into — yes — an art form. Motivated by financial necessity, enabled by new technology, this 'work on the image' is one of the interesting (and entertaining) developments in audio-visual culture. It is also dedicated to the death of the author and a complete snub to the very idea of copyright. Needless to say, it is not mentioned in the Green Paper, although the low ceilings on the levies proposed suggest that somebody in the DTI may have compared the non-affluence of today's youth with the high costs of pre-recorded tapes and records.

Certainly the Department should be congratulated on its sensible proposals on copying for the classroom: for the same reasonable levy, teachers will at last go legit on the off-air taping required for media studies. Without this provision, law-abiding pedagogues have been forced to pay high prices for the few titles distributed or attempt the equivalent of teaching literature without books. Not such a novel dilemma, of course, in this era of education cuts, print inflation and the consequent need to seek permission for more and more photocopying.

And the consultative document on 'The Recording and Rental of Audio and Video Copyright Material'? It runs to 14 pages and costs £2.85. I xeroxed the office copy. □

Mandy Merck is the (print) editor of Screen.

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DIARY

Duncan Campbell

Narita airport, Tokyo, is guarded more tightly than Greenham Common. Encircling the airport is a floodlit barrier of fencing, close-spaced watchtowers, searchlights, and a 'no go' zone laced with electronic detectors. The intense security is an apparently permanent result of the 1970s environmental battles about Narita — site of the third Tokyo airport. An unlikely radical-student/farmer-landowner alliance has survived as a violent direct action movement, which succeeds in occasional explosive attacks against minor airfield installations. To western radical eyes, the issue now seems rather dated.

○

Of course, this attitude may have something to do with my position as an incoming airline passenger, placed *de facto* on the side of the status quo. More alarming was the inbound route we followed to Narita, now one of the world's most notorious air corridors — Red 20 from Anchorage, Alaska. Just over 18 months ago, the ill-fated Korean Air Lines flight 007 flew this way. Having observed one of Korean Air's surviving 747s taking off from Anchorage just ahead of our flight, the passage gives a slight *frisson* of being in the battle zone. Next year the Soviet Union is due to licence a much faster direct air route from Europe to Japan, crossing Soviet territory much of the way. What western intelligence agencies and the buffoons in the Soviet military may yet combine to achieve then, I shudder to think.

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I was in Japan for a peace research conference on the theme of Strategic De-alignment and Autonomy in the Asia-Pacific Region. The obscurity of the title was deliberate — to safeguard participants from some south Asian countries, where the secret police do not understand political concepts written in polysyllables. It is appropriate to discuss these problems in Japan because the major problem in creating a de-aligned, non-nuclear Pacific *is* Japan — and to a lesser extent, the People's Republic of China. With Japan and China in the lead, there could be a strong, and globally important movement, for a nuclear-free and unaligned west Pacific region. But Japan is now even further embedded into the US military camp. Prime Minister Yashiro Nakasone's call two years ago for Japan to be the US's 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' in the Pacific still echoes loudly. China's position is, if anything, worse. It is now five years since the United States set up two secret electronic intelligence bases in north-western China.

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Hiroshima seems at first an outright disappointment. Arriving by bullet train, going by taxi to a western-style 12-storey hotel, built just 400 yards from where the atom bomb was detonated, I was not prepared for the lack of desolation I saw. An advertisement for a neighbouring luxury hotel, even closer to Ground Zero, completed a bizarre picture, soliciting visitors to travel to its 22nd floor and 'enjoy soft live music as you look down upon the twinkling night lights of Hiroshima'.

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Soon after the war, Hiroshima's people created a Peace Park and Museum in the centre of their devastated city. Inside the Museum, there are many artifacts from 6 August 1945 — a watch which stopped at the time of the explosion, jars of hideous, preserved scar tissue and a few physical objects microscopically manifest what took place. Some, like mangled bridge girders, are physically large enough to be touched, like a holy relic. But even a large table-model of Hiroshima after the bombing reminds one only of the pitiful inadequacy of words and direct representation to convey such experiences. The often crude and simple paintings by A-bomb survivors are far more evocative, leaving more to the imagination.

○

Of course, Hiroshima had to be rebuilt as a bustling modern Japanese city! But finally, beside the one remaining preserved ruin, the famous 'atomic dome', quietness can be found on the banks of the river in which, as contemporary accounts vividly describe, so many hideously burnt victims of the atom bomb saw out their short lives seeking relief from their pain. 2,000 feet below the centre of the explosion, the old image of Hiroshima returns, powerfully and angrily. The new buildings of Hiroshima don't matter. I didn't come for the buildings, neither glittering new ones nor flattened old ones. I came for the people who were here. Hiroshima's dead were less than one per cent of the slaughter created between 1939 and 1945. But their importance is to the future, not the past. The memorial that many of us leave in the Peace Museum's visitors' book is short, apt and faithful: Never again Hiroshima!

○

Returning to Britain, I face an old, but manifestly grave threat to civil liberty. According to leaked standing orders issued by the Home Office's Immigration Service I am registered in their Suspect Index or 'Black Book', held by every passport checker. Passport officers encountering me should carry out Action A — tell MI5; Action S — tell the Special Branch and Action Q — find out exactly where I am going — all without alerting my suspicion, of course. Now, on my 18th trip since becoming official Suspect No 49940, I fear that, for the 36th time, passport officials will once again fail properly to respect my status as a registered subversive — and MI5 will be left again in ignorance of where I have been. My patriotic duty is clear; I have to warn these dilatory Immigration Service wallies that I am no mere traveller, but one of the select few in the special Blue Pages at the back of their Black Book. We are, after all, a very distinguished company — Tariq Ali, Vanessa Redgrave, Robert Mugabe, Kim Philby, me and only a few more.

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But recognition have I none. Each time, as I hand over my passport, adding with assurance 'I'm in the book, you know', a knowing, thin smile crosses the passport wally's face: 'Oh we're in the book are we sir, you and how many other jokers just come staggering off the last jumbo going to tell me that? Enjoy our trip abroad, I hope we did sir, and welcome to Britain'. I sigh. Try as I and MI5 may, these unsung heroes of civil liberty, the anonymous grey men and women of the Immigration Service, are clearly striving with equal diligence to undermine all MI5's best efforts. Welcome back to Britain, sir.

ROGER WODDIS

Howe human

'Sir Geoffrey has sounded the first note on the trumpet.'
— The Times *on the Foreign Secretary's call for human rights during his Eastern European tour.*

How boldly rang his trumpet!
How human and how right!
How luminous the halo
That bathes his head in light!

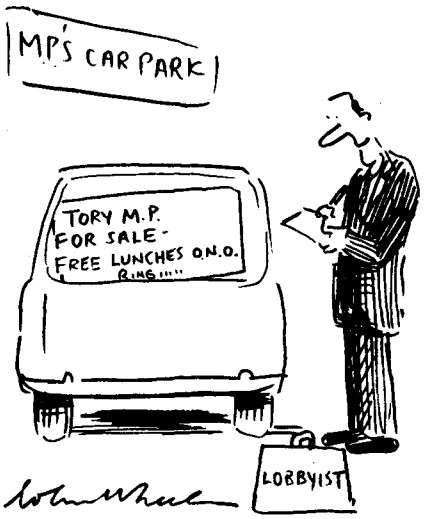
He laid it on the Germans,
He laid it on the Poles,
He told the Czechs their charter
Brought hope to simple souls.

Their fundamental freedoms
Lay closest to his heart;
He put his tongue to humbug
And raised it to an art.

How noble were his motives,
How high his moral tone,
While leaving tortured Turkey
And Latin lands alone.

He is no tinkling cymbal
Or thing of sounding brass,
But blows a braver music,
The clarion of his class.

O, hear the brazen trumpet
Of good Sir Geoffrey Howe,
Wind instrument of freedom
And holier than thou!



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BREACH OF GENEVA CONVENTIONS

David Adams reports on the protests of the international community at the way in which the Israeli authorities have forcibly moved civilian detainees from camps in South Lebanon to prisons in Israel itself, and exposes the claim that it's a short-term measure

ISRAELI AUTHORITIES claimed last week that the transfer of 1,200 detainees from the Ansar prison camp in southern Lebanon to Israel is only a temporary measure and does not represent a breach of international law. Denials that Israel has thus contravened the Fourth Geneva Convention, which governs the treatment of civilians, came after allegations to that effect by the US State Department, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Article 49 prohibits the forced transfer of civilians from occupied territory to the territory of an occupying power.

Senior Israeli officials claim the prisoners, who are mainly Lebanese Shia Muslims, will be receiving Red Cross visits and that their physical conditions will be better than at Ansar.

They also claim that, if any of the men are still in detention in three months time, they will have the right to appeal to a special three man commission, headed by a district court judge, under terms first set out as emergency regulations in 1948 under the British mandate.

Despite assurances, though, that the detention in Israel is only a short-term measure, Israel's Chief of Staff, General Moshe Levy, said last week that the men's release would be heavily dependent on the then security situation in Lebanon.

Tight security now surrounds the whereabouts of the detainees transferred on 2 April. Reporters have been barred from visiting the new prison compounds where the men are being held. The Israeli army claims that 40 per cent of the men have been actively involved in guerrilla attacks on Israeli soldiers, while the rest are only suspected of membership of 'terrorist' organisations. According to Amnesty International, however, individual detainees have not yet been informed of specific evidence or charges against them.

But one fact has so far escaped attention. Some 140 detainees are known to have been transferred from Ansar prison camp to prisons in Israel as long as 16 months ago. And, while uncertainty surrounds the fate of the latest 1,200 detainees, perhaps some indications as to the treatment they will receive can be gained from the experiences of those not so 'short-term' prisoners.

On 24 November 1983, Ansar prison camp was temporarily closed down, following a signed prisoner exchange agreement, under the guarantee of the ICRC whereby the 4,456 men held at Ansar at that time (plus 35 women held at a nearby camp), together with 100 Palestinian political prisoners from the Israeli Occupied Territories, were exchanged for six Israeli soldiers held by the PLO.

At the last moment, 140 Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners, who were to have been among those exchanged, were secretly moved across the border to Atlit military prison near Haifa in Israel. There are 121 of them still being held there and a further four women, who are detained at Neve Tirtza prison near Ramleh.

Camera Press

Chief of Staff General Levy seen talking to young Israeli tank crew in Lebanon: 'security considerations' will be overriding in deciding when prisoners will be released

The majority of these detainees were held incommunicado from November 1983 until the Red Cross was finally allowed to see them on 9 July 1984. It was only after an appeal to the Israeli Supreme Court in March 1984 by Israeli lawyer, Mrs Felizia Langer, that just two detainees were permitted to see lawyers. Since then only five of the men are known to have been visited by lawyers. Until now no family visits have been allowed, although they have been able to exchange letters with their families through the ICRC, since last July.

Three lawyers, Felizia Langer, Walid Fahoum and Mazen Kopti, are now protesting that the men are totally cut off from the outside world, living in crowded conditions of 23 to a cell, and that no communciation is allowed between those in different cells. Neither books and newspapers nor radios are allowed. Amnesty International cites the sworn affadavits of two of the five men who have seen lawyers. Both allege brutal treatment, being forced to stand with raised hands for hours on end, hands tied and blindfolded for days and beatings as a matter of course. An added degradation is having to stand with head bent down when in the presence of a soldier, to avoid eye contact. The ICRC have only been allowed to visit these men every six weeks.

The Israeli authorities claim that the transfer of the prisoners to Israel is legal according to a provisional law, issued by the Ministry of Defence in August 1983, the 'Law for the Extension of the Emergency Regulations (Custody of Detainees from Lebanon in Israel)'. It is under this law that detainees have the right to appeal after three months. This law also requires that prisoners be made aware of this provision no later than a fortnight after an arrest has been made. It is clear that neither of these conditions was respected in the cases of those transferred in November 1983, although the Israeli authorities have told Amnesty International that every one of these earlier detainees has now appeared before the appeals committee.

Amnesty International is concerned that, in the majority of cases, appeal hearings have been held 'in camera'. 'In the very few cases where a lawyer has been present, it has been reported that the detainee has not been confronted with all the evidence against him, reasons of security being given', says Amnesty.

Effective censorship in the Israeli press has meant that much of the information regarding these cases has been suppressed. Lawyer Mazen Kopti is presently threatening to institute legal proceedings in the High Court on behalf of an Israeli newspaper over censorship of articles relating to what has been going on at the Atlit camp. □

Next week: interview with Mustafa Saad, a prominent member of the Lebanese National Resistance Front.

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FUTURE FISSURES

Last week's election saw left-wing parties come first and second. Mark Austin assesses the twin risks of intervention by the United States or the military

Lima

THE PERUVIAN novelist, Mario Vargas Llosa, set his last book *Mayta* in the not too distant future in a Peru which has become another theatre of war in the superpower conflict. Cuban troops have invaded the south of the country from Bolivia, joining up with Peruvian revolutionary forces. The government has called on Washington for help. The US Marines have arrived.

Vargas Llosa is a novelist in the realistic tradition and his scenario is not all that far-fetched. The country is in the worst mess in its history and its deep divisions have prevented any sensible confrontation of the truly awesome problems with which it is beset.

These include a huge and virtually unrepayable foreign debt; a broken-backed economy; rampant corruption now fuelled additionally by cocaine money; frail political institutions constantly threatened by military takeover; a young, hungry, deprived and increasingly violent urban population; and, most serious of all, a well-organised and ruthless Maoist guerrilla organisation, 'Sendero Luminoso' — the shining path.

During the last four years Sendero Luminoso has brought terrorism into the cities and turned a vast area of the central highlands into a war zone. The full might of the military has not been able to contain them, despite being given a free hand by the government, with ghastly results in terms of the actrocities committed against the civilian population.

It is not fanciful to see Washington embroiled in an armed struggle to retain control of this huge country, the third largest in South America, with its enormous mineral wealth and its strategic position. Last week's first round presidential election results must make much better reading in Moscow than in Washington.

The elections are only the second to be held in Peru in 20 years and the fact that they are taking place at all represents perhaps the only real achievement of the outgoing government of President Belaunde. Yet ironically enough for him, the first round of the elections has almost wiped out the party he founded, Accion Popular. The Right, responsible for years of mismanagement, corruption and disastrous economic policies, has been comprehensively defeated.

Apra (the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance) with a hard-to-pin-down left-of-centre stance took around 48 per cent of the vote and will win any run off election; the United Left, a shaky collection of Marxist parties, including the Moscow-line Communist Party, came second with 22 per cent. There was a very high proportion of blank and spoiled votes, but the result is still the same: the Left in first and second places and the rest nowhere.

For the first time in Peruvian history, apart from the brief but important interlude of General Juan Velasco's left-wing military regime from 1968-75, the hitherto dominant white minority will be out of power. As in so many other countries in Latin America, it has been through that white minority, heirs to the Spanish colonial system whose structures they have never seen fit to change, that the economic and political interests of the United States in Peru have been promoted and maintained. Thus the eclipse of the Right in Peru will mean not only that power will be exercised by people much closer to the masses; it will also lead to much more abrasive relationship with the United States.

Apra is an unusual party in Latin American terms. It was founded in 1924 by Victor Raul Haya de la Torre, who led it until his death in 1980. It is therefore one of the continent's oldest parties. Yet it has never achieved power.

Originally conceived as a Pan-American anti-imperialist movement, it eventually took root as a Peruvian political party. Rejecting Marxism as providing an inadequate theoretical basis for a Latin American party, it nevertheless established itself in championing the cause of the grossly exploited workers on the big sugar plantations of the north, estates owned exclusively by rich Peruvians or by United States interests.

Apra was thus an early focus of opposition to those interests. But its history is also stained with political murder and violence, and there is a long tradition of bitter hostility with the military, who have hitherto always put a veto on Apra taking office.

TODAY APRA IS LED by a charismatic 35-year-old lawyer, Alan Garcia, who sprang to prominence only three years ago. He is long on rhetoric, skilful on television, but short on concrete measures to deal with Peru's daunting problems.

Nobody can be sure how his relationship with the military will work out: and there must be a doubt whether he has anything better to offer the rural population in the emergency zones, who are faced with Sendero Luminoso, than the indiscriminate repression they have suffered so far; whether he has the will or the strength to insist on clean government and to see off the drug traffickers; whether he can extricate Peru from the consequences of its foreign debt; and above all whether he can find economic policies which will enable the poor to be fed, housed and employed.

Nor is it at all clear what kind of relationship Apra will seek with the communist countries whose diplomatic missions are so thick on the ground in Lima, though the relationship is sure to be a good deal closer than it was under President Belaunde. And Peru under Apra will also ally itself with other Latin American countries, especially Argentina and Venezuela, in trying to take a much tougher line over the repayment of foreign debt.

For the United Left a victory at the polls was never a practical possibility, if only because neither the military nor Washington would have allowed a Marxist government to take over in Peru today. Second place is therefore their best possible result and one which would have been inconceivable only a few years ago.

Moderation has been the keynote of Alfonso Barrantes, the United Left's leader, an astute and diminutive lawyer from the provinces, affectionately known as 'little bean'. But Barrantes's own moderation is not shared by other members of his coalition, and the splits showed up clearly, as usual, during the campaign. Nevertheless time is on the side of the United Left if they can hold together.

Those hungry, deprived and impatient urban masses will be more numerous, hungrier and even more impatient in five years' time. If Apra fails, two alternative paths will beckon them: the shining path of violence, offered by the guerrillas to all those who have nothing to lose, and the Marxist option offered by the United Left.

But will that latter option be open in five years time? The traditional process in Peruvian politics has always been an alternation between civilian and military rule. If Apra takes over in July, it will be only the second time in Peruvian history that one civilian government has been succeeded by another. On any normal reckoning then, the military will take over in a year of two — and there will be many elements in the defeated Right urging them to do so.

In the short term the military might hold the fort. But in the longer term the struggle now looks much more complicated. And that not too distant future of Mario Vargas Llosa could well be only just over the horizon. □

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SOLVING ALL OUR PROBLEMS

Maureen Duffy on the conflict between creativity and the 'nitty gritty'

Banff, Canada

IT SEEMS A crazy way to spend the Easter holiday, travelling 5,000 miles to solve the world's problems in company with a hundred practitioners of the arts from 38 countries. As I sit in a strike bound plane at Schipol airport for three hours I wonder if I'm merely getting my version of the Aldermaston fix. Crossing through time zones is almost a necessary part of the exercise and the small flock of sparrows that live in the potted palms of the departure lounge at Amsterdam, sipping from the drinking fountain after the humans, seems a surreal metaphor for the survival of art in a technocratic age. My neighbour, I learn when we take off, is a young Canadian ice hockey player on his way home from a season with a German team. I get off at Calgary and am driven into the sunset towards the Rockies through miles of dun coloured winter prairie. By the time we reach the Banff centre it's too late to see the mountains and anyway I'm so jet-lagged I don't care. I've forgotten to reset my watch too. I wake suddenly in the night to hear the most haunting and forlorn sound repeated four times and fantasize some mad artist's brainchild of a wind chiming clock as I fall down again through sleep.

In the morning I discover it was the distinctive cry of a Canadian Pacific locomotive. The skies are cloudless duckegg behind *National Geographical Magazine* snow-drifted peaks so clear they seem quite unreal. Participants are still coming in and after dinner we get down to business with statements from four of us on the theme of the symposium: *Shaping the Future: The Arts in a World in Crisis*. The piles of paper conference excreta begin to be deposited. Our British contingent includes Richard Hoggart, who quickly establishes himself as the voice of reason against well-known artistic impracticality. Gradually faces accrete names, disciplines, personalities. We are certainly a disparate lot: run of the mill sculptors, dancers, painters and writers of course, but also a Tokyo landscape gardener, a monumental Russian film director — with no word of French or English — soothing his worry beads, a performer/designer resplendent as a hummingbird in a new costume every day.

We form small groups for discussion, break and come together again in an elaborate dance of word play. The arts may not talk but artists certainly do. There are special groupings: francophone, Commonwealth, Latin American, and the three Chinese who go about together with pilot-fish interpreter. We are a microcosm of the world but one in which a quite extraordinary closeness across the bounds of culture and nationality begins to be felt. I've been to international conferences before but none of them were like this. Everything seems possible. Then we have our midlife crisis.

UPP

'The arts may not talk but artists certainly do'

Before the session begins on Tuesday morning, Bernard Levin proposes a competition for which, like Alice with the Caucus race, he will award a prize to the one showing in cartoon an artist mouthing words of wisdom to the world's leaders that will solve everything. We laugh but we are undermined. It's the old canard: art and the artist make nothing happen. We should all go back to our ivory towers and get on with our own thing. This shifts the ground of argument sideways, and away from the first aims of the symposium: 'to test if it is possible to focus the creative power of the world's artists on resolving humanity's pressing problems' — the imbalance between North and South, environmental pollution, the bomb. Now we have been told they aren't ours to consider except as individual artists and citizens. We are not to combine; there is no constituency; we have no collective voice or wisdom as artists. We are, however, admitted to have something to say on collective matters involving the arts themselves such as cultural policies and exchanges, and dive into a discussion of these with the relief born of confidence in our own standing and credibility.

In the afternoon we are allowed out while the symposium organisers discuss progress so far before the phase two participants, representatives of governments, funding bodies, big business and arts management are let loose among the wild artists. Banff, which still has the shape and an architecture descended from the frontier township it once was, is full of tourist shops where the signs are in English and Japanese. Over the bridge is the Indian Trading Post selling moccasins, stuffed animals, wampum.

Takeaway kitsch imposes its own ubiquitous style whatever the local content, from scottie dogs to totem poles. The only arty-facts the symposium members would recognise are the soapstone figurines carved by people I was brought up to call Eskimos and must now relearn as Inuit. Each piece is authenticated by a label with the artist's name, place, date and a number. On the opposite shelves stand the moulded imitations for those who can't afford the real thing at upwards of £50 a piece. The town is litter and graffiti free yet curiously impermanent. Snow still lies in heaps of dirty congealed sugar in the back yards. The altitude makes me puff like an Inuit walrus as I climb back through the woods to the centre.

NEXT MORNING we divide into the groups we shall keep until we leave and struggle with the arts in education, arts pressure groups, festivals, communications technology and other nitty gritty indigestibles. It's the kind of treadmill work artists feel they should protest about and they do. Suddenly the plenary session is enmeshed in strands of multi-coloured wool, flung like carnival streamers, a happening to express both the tangle we are in and our sense of being bound together. What's getting us down is the lingua bureaucratica seemingly inseparable from conferences. The francophones in their turn protest against what they regard as Anglo-Saxon *jeunesse d'esprit*. In the evening we dance madly to show our creative freedom.

The last day has us back in our groups to plan what happens after. When we come together Bernard Levin proposes what I recognise as a piece of British shamateurism. Instead of the loosely organised network run by a Banff secretariat that will keep us in touch and bring us together again to press the dialogues further we should have a round robin of cultural pen-pals scribbling busily to two other participants six letters a year. Over us hangs the ghost of UNESCO and of apartheid which the very nature of this gathering has made even more ludicrously obscene. We call on the United Nations for a Year of the Arts and the Canadian Pacific wails its mournful French horn. □

Maureen Duffy's Collected Poems *will be published in July by Hamish Hamilton.*

THE ANCIENT WISDOM

There is a tradition that behind all the religions and philosophies, there is a vein of persisting truths which never change. They relate to the very nature of the Cosmos, both on the vast and the minute scale. We are in and of that nature. Makes you think — Yes?

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COSTS OF DEFAULT

As the world's finance ministers meet in Washington, David Ward describes the mounting pressures on debtor countries

EARLIER THIS YEAR the financial community was euphorically declaring that the Third World debt crisis was over as the major debtors — Mexico, Brazil and Argentina — agreed to reschedule their loans under austerity programmes administered by the International Monetary Fund. Yet by mid-April, as finance ministers gather in Washington for the Spring IMF and World Bank meetings, a new bout of gloom has surfaced with one banker warning that '1985 could be the worst year yet' of the $910 billion debt crisis.

The sudden change of mood has been prompted by a series of set-backs for the biggest borrowers and growing doubts about the consequences of the slowdown in the world economic recovery. Brazil for example, the world's largest debtor, owing about $100 billion and suffering acute political instability following the serious illness of its newly elected President Tancredo Neves, has had its IMF loan suspended because of the country's failure to meet key domestic monetary targets.

Furthermore Brazil's trade surplus (crucial for financing debt service payments) seems likely to fall below this year's official target of $12.9 billion which may force the country's 700 bank creditors to increase their exposure and offer new 'involuntary' loans.

Similar difficulties have beset Mexico and Argentina and have rudely disrupted the complacent assumptions that the debt crisis no longer threatens the viability of the international financial system. A number of interlocking issues haunt the minds of both bankers and finance ministers alike. Will the industrialised world grow sufficiently fast to enable the debtors to sustain their export surpluses, meet their interest payments and resume 'normal' borrowing?

The major debtors have relied heavily on the buoyant US recovery. Eighty-five per cent of the increase in Latin American exports between 1982-84 has been absorbed by the US. The marked slowdown in US economic growth will therefore deny crucial foreign exchange earnings for Latin America and there is little prospect that the rest of the industrialised world will be prepared to take over the task of purchasing 'cheap' imports from Third World debtors, because that would create trade deficit problems for them.

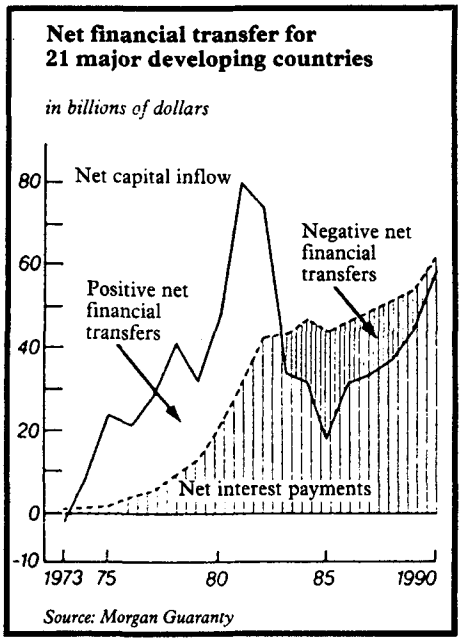
The US itself is now facing unprecedented demands from domestic industry to reverse the flood of imports and the threat of wholesale protectionism is very real. The US trade deficit boosted by the high value of the dollar has soared to record levels reaching $123 billion last year and is predicted to rise to $160 billion this year. With jobs and industries such as steel and textiles under heavy pressure, draconian proposals have been suggested in the US Congress including a temporary 20 per cent import surcharge.

THE SCENARIO of slowed US growth, the threat of increased protectionism and possible hikes in US interest rates sends a chill down the spines of Latin American finance ministers and rekindles the arguments of the more radical debtor nations to refuse to service their debts on the terms demanded by the Western banks and the International Monetary Fund. A fascinating analysis of refusing to repay debts has been written by Anatole Kaletsky, a leader writer for the *Financial Times*. In a paper recently published by the Twentieth Century Fund, *The Costs of Default**, Kaletsky argues that over the last 500 years 'governments and nations have regularly defaulted on their foreign debts' and that in the current crisis there exists a 'genuine risk that a default might still occur'.

Kaletsky believes that over the longer term the willingness of the major debtors to repay their debts at a cost of deep economic depression and high inflation will be eroded. 'As both the successes and sacrifices of adjustment become more manifest', he writes, 'politicians in debtor countries will begin to demand rewards in terms of higher domestic consumption, price stability, jobs, and national self-determination...It must be questionable whether trade surpluses of $10 billion to $15 billion a year — much higher in relation to gross national product than those achieved by Japan for example — can be sustained for decades on end by countries as poor and populous as Mexico and Brazil. Yet such continuous surpluses lie at the heart of the current "solution" to the debt problem.'

AN EXAMINATION of the real costs of debt repayment for the individual borrowing countries more than justifies Kaletsky's scepticism. Latin America, taken as a whole, has suffered a decline in per capita incomes of almost 10 per cent in the three year period 1981-84. In the case of Brazil, to restore the loss of per capita income to the levels achieved in 1980 will require the economy to grow at 5 per cent per annum from now until 1990. Yet such a target is unlikely to be met because austerity measures have severely depressed the domestic economy. The growth that is available can only come from exports which account for only 10 per cent of Brazil's gross national product. The debtor countries are hence increasing obliged to adopted an 'export or die' (or more appropriately 'export *and* die') trade strategy.

Assuming the loss of will to service their debts, Kaletsky believes that the major borrowers could opt for a so-called 'conciliatory' default, 'which lies somewhere between co-operation with creditors and outright repudiation'. He suggests that selective measures such as the imposition of unilateral interest reductions could be undertaken rather than 'the simple refusal to honour all debts'. Once this possibility is admitted, Kaletsky maintains that 'the relationship between bankers, debtors, and creditor country governments begins to have more in common with a game of poker than with a traditional commercial negotiation. A close look at the cards moreover suggests a deck which is stacked in favour of the borrowers, not the bankers'.



The Costs of Default shows that it should be possible to resolve the debt crisis 'permanently and securely through a co-operative restructuring of the developing countries' debts'. Kaletsky points out that such a 'fundamental solution need not be unduly expensive to taxpayers in industrial countries or ruinous to the banks'. He doubts however that such a solution is probable until the world begins to recognise the real risk of default. Such a recognition, Kaletsky believes, may prove impossible 'without the catalyst of an actual or imminent default'.

In Washington this week it is unlikely that Western finance ministers will offer any hint of the recognition that Kaletsky believes is a pre-condition for resolving the debt crisis even if privately they will voice their fears of default. Most significant, however, is the shift of policy in the US caused by their anxiety over economic slowdown and the unstable dollar. Notably, Paul Volcker, Chairman of the US Federal Reserve, last week urged European countries to boost their economies and effectively take over the role of locomotive force for the world economy. By exporting its quasi-Keynesian expansionism to Europe, the US hopes to ensure that the industrialised nations can grow by 3 per cent per annum. Such growth rates, warns the World Bank, are 'the minimum necessary to let the biggest debtors countries restore their debt servicing capacity'.

Nigel Lawson are you listening? □

*The Costs of Default *by Anatole Kaletsky is available from Priority Press Publications, 41 East 70 Street, New York, NY 10021, price $7.00.*

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LETTERS

Soaps and the miners

Jimmy McGovern, Liverpool

John Ellis (*NS* 5 April) knows a lot about movies, precious little about Soap Opera. First, the miners' strike *was* mentioned on *Brookside*. Several times. I know because I happened to write those episodes. Second, the 'sophisticated assessment' of the dispute did take place *after* the strike was over, yes, but it was written many months before — and if John Ellis cares to watch it again he'll realise that it only *seems* like a post mortem because the strike had finished; it certainly wasn't meant to be. I know because, again, I wrote it.

You cannot write about Soap and ignore the production process. It's a conveyor belt. The raw material, the script, is placed on the belt and it takes at least three months before it emerges at the other end as a programme on the screen. This time lapse causes enormous problems. For example, when the miners' strike began in March I, for one, thought it wouldn't last three months — not without a ballot. How could we then base a major part of our programme on an issue that might be dead and buried when the programme hit the screen? Similarly, later in Autumn I thought there would soon be power cuts and consequently the miners would win — i.e., it would all be over within three months. So again we couldn't tackle the issue properly. Hence the compromise, the 'sophisticated analysis' which could still be shown with or without an ongoing strike.

We didn't discuss the strike enough, I admit. We couldn't. Off the screen, though, the vast majority of the cast, the crew and the writers supported the striking miners — with their time and their money. I'm sure they'd all object to being linked with *Dallas* and *Dynasty* on an issue like the British miners' strike.

Fish not fowl

Magda Sachs, London N7

I am in basic sympathy with Harriett Gilbert (*NS* 12 April), but would like to question one priority she implies. She advises aspiring vegetarians to order quiche or oeufs florentines, when they are eating in restaurants, and confesses that it is only 'when the going gets tough' that she has been known to order fish.

All but 4 per cent of the eggs consumed in Britain are produced by battery hens. I think, if given the choice, which of course none of the animals involved *is* given, I would choose to be a fish dying suddenly after a life in my own element, rather than to be a hen, caged and enclosed, debeaked and fed on a diet of growth hormones and antibiotics. This is why I often go for the cod not the quiche.

In the rough

Lt. Col. W. G. Pettifar, City of London HQ, Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, HM Tower of London

Your TV critic (*NS* 5 April) says 'unbelievably there is an 18 hole golf course in the grounds of the Tower'. He's right, it is unbelievable; there isn't.

Black literary traditions

Paul Gilroy, London N4

In her enthusiasm to prove that I am the black equivalent of a 'radical feminist' Michèle Barrett (Letters 12 April) has rather missed the point. I have no desire to vet Francis Mulhern's 'background reading' nor to deny him the right to assess black writing if that's what he wants to do.

The intention of my letter was merely to say that if he wants his assessments to be taken seriously by blacks, then he should treat their literary heritage with the respect which its complexity and its political engagement demand. Why, for example should his claim for Alice Walker's pre-eminence pass unchallenged if the black writers who made her own work possible remain unread? Why should they be relegated to 'background reading' as Barrett would have it?

Alice Walker has been scrupulous in her acknowledgements of the achievements of her black literary ancestors. What is it which makes the Barretts and Mulherns of this world unable to do likewise? Fifteen years ago, white radicals thought that Eldridge Cleaver was the only black writer worthy of the name. Their careless and arrogant reconstruction of black literary traditions is not necessarily innocent. To query it is not to advocate absolutist restrictions on the right of white critics to have opinions, it is an overdue acknowledgement of the political economy of publishing black writers.

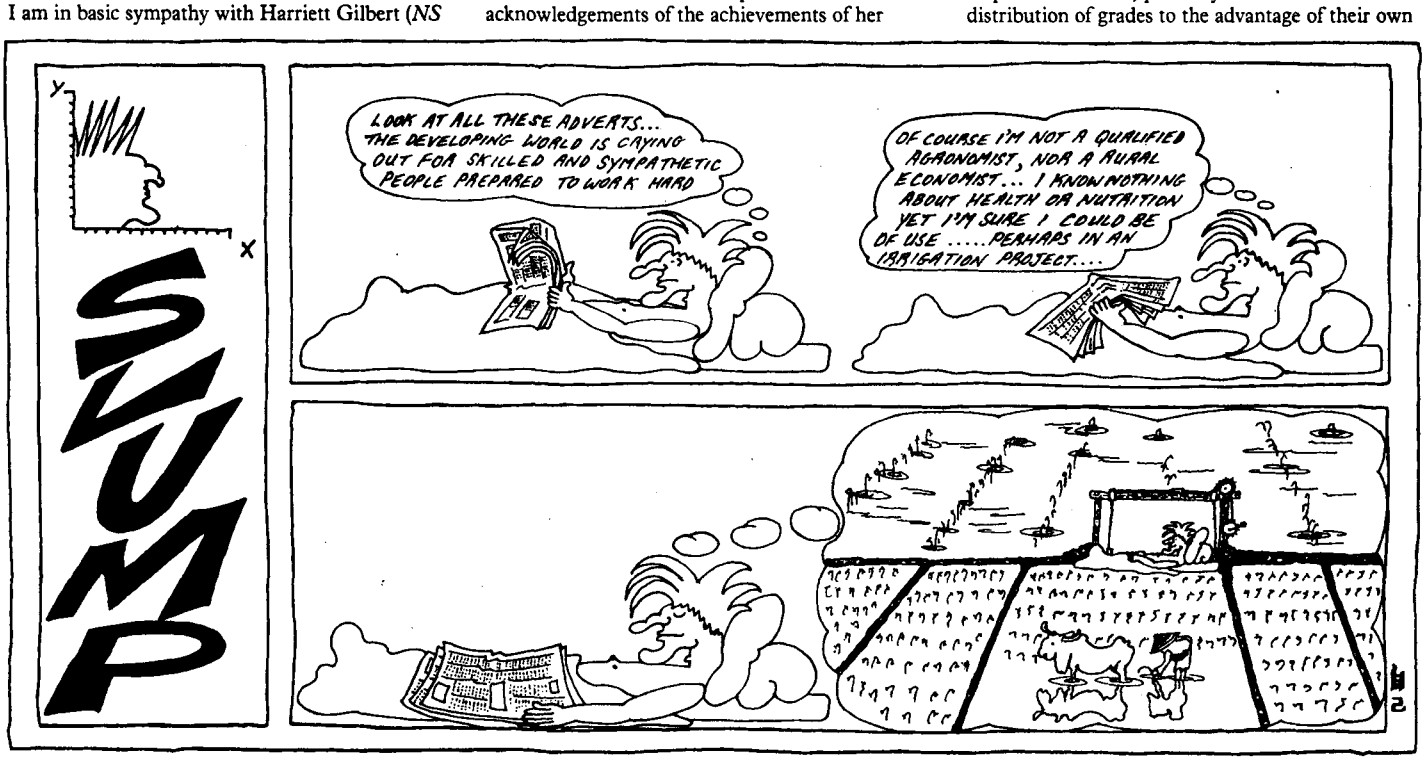
Playing the Boards

Daniel Lowy, Sutton, Surrey

Barry Hugill (*NS* 12 April) suggests that Sir Keith Joseph has grasped the nettle 'in his own muddled way', but the Minister is not stupid. He has indeed shaken up the kaleidoscope and let the 'A's and 'O's and 'CSE's fall into a new and more egalitarian-looking pattern, but in the outcome, the consequences adhere precisely to his ideology. It is surely no accident that the new dispensation will ensure in tomorrow's exam hall, as in today's classroom, that 'monetarism rules OK' when it embodies a pair of provisions which, taken together, will have this effect.

The first of these is the purely negative one that the multiplicity of Regional Examining Boards is not to be replaced by a single National Board. It used to be unavoidable that exams should be organised on a regional basis because, to set a paper and mark the resulting scripts, the Examiners had to attend a series of conferences, and these had to take place at one single centre. This is no longer true. These days, thanks to information technology, Examiners from Land's End to John O'Groats could perfectly well hold all their conferences without leaving their schools, and the need for the Regional Boards is gone. This fact cannot have escaped Sir Keith's notice.

He must also be aware that discreditable anomalies in the award of grades between different Boards have sometimes been very striking — so striking, indeed, that, in the past, many Department Heads, precisely in order to skew the distribution of grades to the advantage of their own


SUMP
LOOK AT ALL THESE ADVERTS... THE DEVELOPING WORLD IS CRYING OUT FOR SKILLED AND SYMPATHETIC PEOPLE PREPARED TO WORK HARD
OF COURSE I'M NOT A QUALIFIED AGRONOMIST, NOR A RURAL ECONOMIST... I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT HEALTH OR NUTRITION YET I'M SURE I COULD BE OF USE .....PERHAPS IN AN IRRIGATION PROJECT...

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pupils, have carefully selected which Board to use. Was it just 'his own muddled way' that made Sir Keith devolve the details of the new examination system onto the existing Boards? When the one thing he could be most certain of was that none of them would be minded to abolish themselves in the process? In fact, and quite predictably, they are busy accentuating more firmly than ever before the anomalies between regional Boards, as particular dogs are wagged by one or the other of the two tails, 'O', or 'CSE'.

The second and equally unspectacular provision of the scheme goes some way to answering this question. A relatively new measure, presented as just another economy 'cut', has been to remove from schools the freedom to choose equally among the existing Examining Boards: a school, or a subject department within a school, is still allowed to use an Examining Board other than its own local one, but now it is obliged to pay an additional fee for the privilege. From henceforth, therefore, 'playing the Boards' is open only to those who can pay. Where money is tight (i.e. in the public sector), only the local board will be used, but no doubt we shall find that the 'public' schools exercise their freedom of choice, as before, for the margin of advantage that it confers.

It appears that Sir Keith has used this particular issue to bring the cash register from the classroom (where it has always been) squarely into the examination hall. This is monetarism in action. If he has grasped the nettle, it was no muddle. He has strategically transplanted it to fill a gap in the hedge.

B- for Beasley

Mick Hamer, c/o New Statesman

The response of John Telford Beasley, chair of London Buses (Letters 12 April), to my article about getting rid of conductors varies from being tendentious to just plain wrong. To save space I will deal with just two points, although his other remarks are no more valid.

I know he has not been in his job long, but someone in his organisation ought to know that London Transport first announced its plans for converting all its buses to one person operation (OPO) in 1966 — as he will find on page 355 of London Transport's official history — if it hasn't been rewritten since the government takeover.

The unreliability of OPO buses certainly was a factor in the halt of conversion, in 1978. For half a dozen years after this Beasley's predecessors were engaged in the bizarre process of selling their newest buses (all OPO) because they were clapped out and scouring the country to buy second-hand Routemasters, a model of bus that requires a conductor, just because they were reliable.

When Beasley seeks to deny that the frequency of a bus service must drop after conversion to OPO he appears not to understand elementary arithmetic. OPO buses are slower than Routemasters. They therefore take longer to complete a round trip. Therefore, if the frequency of a service is to be maintained then every 10 Routemasters has to be replaced with a dozen or more OPO buses. If Beasley is intending to replace Routemasters with more OPO buses, then he should say so. If he is only to replace each Routemaster by one OPO, then frequencies are bound to drop.

Beasley is also wrong to think that passenger demand is 'separate' from the conversion to OPO, when he says that services may be cut if the number of passengers falls. Conversion to OPO, on its own, will cause a drop in passengers. First, because journeys are slower, and second, because up to 20 per cent of the passengers on Routemasters jump on, inbetween stops — which they can't do if the bus's doors are closed.

FEEDBACK

Safe in whose hands?

A MONTH AGO I received a heart-breaking letter from parents in my constituency with a 9-year-old son who has cystic fibrosis: 'It affects the lungs and digestive system and requires daily treatment, constant taking of pills and antibiotics to fight off infections, together with physio-therapy twice and sometimes four times a day for 40 minutes each time. If you can imagine treating someone you know (and that there is no cure) day in day out, weekends and holidays, in our case for the past 9 years — and some parents have two children in their families with the disease — then you will hopefully understand the time and strain put on the family. . .'

They went on: 'He has always been under the guidance of the specialists, doctors and nurses of Pendlebury Children's Hospital, Manchester, where he has without doubt received the kindest attention that anyone could hope for.' But now 'the powers at government and local level are going to close this ward at Pendlebury Hospital to cystic fibrosis children. It will mean that the dedicated sisters and nurses and specialists concerned with cystic fibrosis will be split up, and all the specialist knowledge vital to our children's health will be lost.'

It is not the first time I have received such a letter. Just previously the overnight casualty department at Oldham Royal Infirmary was closed for a night because of a shortage of doctors and patients needing accident or emergency care had to be transported to Rochdale, Tameside or North Manchester, 5-10 miles away. I was told that this was extremely unfortunate, but it would not happen again. Two weeks later the same casualty department was closed again, for the same reason of lack of doctors and nurses to provide cover, this time for four consecutive nights.

Staff or financial shortages, leading to lack of essential care and in many cases even death, is a story now increasingly being repeated throughout the NHS. Each year some 6,000 babies are born prematurely, that is weighing less than 3.25lbs. Intensive care units that provide specialist treatment are now turning away a large number of these. One such unit at St Mary's Hospital, Manchester turns away over 150 critically ill babies each year because of staff shortages due to lack of funds.

The case of Derek Sage, the homeless psychiatric patient denied life-saving renal dialysis treatment because his 'quality of life' was not good enough, is only the most dramatic example of the dozens of persons currently each week left to die because kidney machines they need to stay alive are not made available. Each year about 2,500 people suffer from kidney disease which will kill them if untreated, but 1,100 of these each year are turned away. The problem is not lack of machines, but shortage of staff. Some dialysis units are open only a few days a week, and many kidney machines are unused at night because funding cutbacks prevent employment of the staff needed.

Cash shortages now put drug addicts' lifelines at risk. The only drug centre in Britain that takes in young heroin addicts on the verge of over-dosing, treats them to get drugs out of their system, and for three weeks gives them advice, care and encouragement to accept longer-term help — at the Crisis Intervention Centre at Islington — is about to close.

At the specialist coronary unit at Wythenshawe Hospital, Manchester, which serves all the North-West and Merseyside, the shortage of nurses and facilities takes an average toll of two lives a week. There are 350 heart patients awaiting heart surgery on one list at Wythenshawe, plus another 350 undergoing investigative treatment on another list. The consultant surgeon, John Dark, said: 'We have to cancel operations and send patients away at least once or twice a week because there are not enough nurses'. The registrar, Roger Vaughan, added that: 'One woman died after her operation had been cancelled three times'.

Hypothermia, that is a deep-body temperature below 95° which is often fatal, is known to afflict about ½ per cent of the elderly population in winter, or about 50,000 old people. Yet large numbers of geriatric wards and hospitals have been closed down, often without alternative specialist care being provided within the community. Indeed, the transfer itself can prove fatal.

Norman Fowler's riposte to all this is to insist that health spending is rising in real terms and that more patients are being treated. True as far as it goes, but it neglects two vital points. One is, as the latest edition of the Office of Health Economics' 'Compendium of Health Statistics' shows, that in the past four years real health resources have grown by only .25 per cent a year, compared with an annual real growth of 4 per cent from the mid-1950s. As a result the health service as a proportion of gross national product now absorbs rather *less* than it did in 1980-1.

Second, health expenditure in Britain starts from a low base. We spend 5½ per cent of GNP on health, compared with 8 per cent in France and Germany, 9½ per cent in the USA and 10 per cent in Sweden. If we spent the same proportion of our national resources on health as they do in the USA, the NHS budget would increase by more than an extra £12 billions. However vigorous the pursuit of value for money (which in itself is of course desirable), one can never get a quart out of a pint pot.

The lesson is surely that neither value for money criteria nor productivity in patient throughput, nor sheer levels of expenditure either, are by themselves adequate standards for judging NHS performance. More sensitive criteria are needed. Lives lost which could, and should, have been saved is one. Another is international comparisons: Britain still treats fewer kidney patients per head of the population, performs fewer bypass operations, and has a worse perinatal mortality rate than many comparable countries.

A third crucial index is waiting lists. A recent BMA survey revealed that, for all of the six main specialities reviewed, a majority of district health authorities have experienced a lengthening of waiting times during the past year, when there were no industrial disputes. Other relevent criteria include indices of preventative and community care (where the national Cancer Recall Scheme has recently been cut), levels of cross infection in hospitals, democratic accountability of the service and research inputs for medical break-throughs.

On that basis perhaps we may at last begin to assess what really matters in health care.

Michael Meacher MP

Michael Meacher MP is Opposition spokesperson on health and social security.

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The saboteur

For Churchill, any move to offer any independence to India spelt the end of Britain's empire, and greatness, and he doggedly resisted every one. Thus, argues BRIAN LAPPING in this extract from End of Empire, *he made India's accession to independence more scrambled and violent than it need have been*

THE VILLAIN in the long saga of the end of British rule in India was Winston Churchill. His encouragement to the princes to stand out from the 1935 arrangements for internal self-rule was a major reason for Indians not acquiring responsible government in Delhi before the 1939-45 war. Whether Churchill's motive was genuine political conviction about India or determination to use any convenient stick with which to beat his despised rival, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, the effect was to kill a complicated compromise that had proved just acceptable to Congress, the princes, the Muslim League and both major parties in the British Parliament. The Viceroy of India, Lord Linlithgow, believed he could talk the princes into participating. The Congress, after their satisfactory experience in running the provinces, found the prospect of office at the centre attractive. Gandhi helped the Viceroy smooth the way; Nehru, initally opposed, had acquiesced; Churchill was the chief wrecker.

When the war came, he continued to play the same role. The constitutional offer that the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India worked out early in the war seemed at that time to be enough to buy Congress co-operation. Churchill vetoed it. When, in 1942, he was forced by US President Franklin Roosevelt and the Labour members of his Cabinet to let a similar offer be taken to Delhi by Sir Stafford Cripps, he and the Viceroy corresponded behind Cripps's back in order to destroy the deal. Gandhi, in spite of his pacifism, had stood back to allow the negotiations to succeed and Nehru was doing all he could to bring Congress into the government in support of the war. Naturally the Viceroy was piqued at having a minister brought to India over his head. Cripps was wrong to let Linlithgow feel that he had been excluded from the negotiations. But for the Prime Minister to encourage the Viceroy in undermining the Cabinet's emissary was, again, the action of a wrecker.

The diaries of Lord Wavell, who in 1943 succeeded Linlithgow as Viceroy, offer repeated evidence of Churchill's determination to prevent Indians sharing in constitutional progress which everyone else — provincial Governors, Commander-in-Chief, Secretary of State, the entire weight of British official opinion in India — considered inevitable. Wavell's straightforwardness and honesty are universally acknowledged. He was a cautious Viceroy who recognised that the Congress, as India's government-in-waiting, must be given some practice at the helm if the transition to independence was to be handled successfully. Churchill refused to listen. He wanted the Congress leaders kept in prison and all considerations of constitutional advance avoided. He would not allow Wavell even to meet Gandhi. Attlee, Amery and other members of the Cabinet's India committee disagreed, but they followed Churchill's policy because on India he was irrational and intransigent and therefore beyond argument. Since he was the leader who was winning the war, they felt they could not oppose him.

Pawns in Churchill's game: (left to right) Lord Linlithgow, Mahommed Ali Jinnah, Sir Stafford Cripps

In 1945 the fact that Churchill was Prime Minister enabled Mahommed Ali Jinnah, the Muslim League Leader, to destroy Wavell's plans for an interim government. Under any other Prime Minister, Wavell could have outbluffed Jinnah with the threat of an all-Congress government. Churchill's hatred of Congress was so pathological that he rendered the Viceroy impotent.

These repeated wrecking tactics had enormous effect. If a representative government of Indians had been formed before the war, or in 1940, or in 1942, or when Wavell begged to be allowed to form one in 1943-44, or even in 1945, Congress and the Muslim League could have exercised power for a useful period before the final transfer. Some, at least, of the hundreds of thousands murdered and of the millions driven from their homes in 1947 might have lived on in peace.

Phase I 1935-39

THE 1935 India Act set out a scheme for a federal legislature and system of government in Delhi that never came into being. What blocked it was the mistrust of the princes, India's elephant-riding, tiger-shooting super-landowners. More than a third of the land of India was made up of princely states, whose rulers had allied themselves with the British in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Chamber of Princes, their mutual protection society, put forward the key proposal of the 1935 Act: the creation of a federal legislature to represent both the provinces and the princely states. This idea appealed to British political caution. Most of the princes had banned the Congress and other political parties in their states and had thus maintained a facade of political stability; their over-representation in the central legislature (a third of the seats though they had only a quarter of the population) promised a

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conservative, restraining counterweight to the Congress radicals, who might otherwise predominate.

The Congress, despite the objections of Jawaharlal Nehru to these terms, agreed to take part in the 1935 scheme. To most Congressmen effective autonomy in the provinces was a gain worth having, even at the price of an over-princely centre. But having proposed the federal scheme, the princes now scuppered it. Winston Churchill described the measure as a step that would inevitably lead to complete independence under Congress rule and urged the princes 'to stand out of it'. The way the scheme was written gave them a moment of unwonted power over the British and all India: the federation could not start to function, the Act said, until half the princes acceded to it.

Lord Linlithgow, sent out to Delhi to put the new constitution into effect, tried to convey to the princes that if they did not accede to the federation they would almost certainly face some less attractive option later. He laid before each of them legal documents setting out their own status. He sent a trio of officials round to India to explain the Act to them. But where in Congress he had a skilful, powerful and discreet ally in Gandhi, among the princes no comparably strong leader emerged. Churchill was a powerful campaigner and a big man in British politics — formerly first Lord of the Admiralty, Colonial Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer. He had also served in the Indian army and written extensively on India. Many of the princes paid attention to him. His depiction of Congress as a tyrannical Hindu priesthood greedy for power reinforced their fears. So they backed away from their own proposal.

Phase II: 1939-42

THE VICEROY, Lord Linlithgow, and the Secretary of State for India, Leopold Amery, spent some months in 1940 preparing a declaration that promised an expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council to include more representative Indians immediately and dominion status to India — i.e. full independence with the British monarch as constitutional head of state — within a year of the war's end. When the Viceroy and he had reached agreement, Amery put their proposal to the Cabinet. Churchill immediately cabled the Viceroy: 'Secretary of State has shown me the telegrams and for the first time I realise what has been going on... You must remember that we are here facing the constant threat of invasion... In these circumstances immense constitutional departures cannot be effectively discussed in Parliament and only by the Cabinet to the detriment of matters touching the final life and safety of the State. I am sure that I can count upon you to help us to the utmost of your power.' Thus — at a time when he was considering union with France and a common citizenship — Churchill crushed the attempt by the men primarily responsible for the government of India to win Indian co-operation. The grudging offer the Viceroy was allowed to make to the Indian leaders in August 1940 was predictably rejected by them.

In the aftermath of the Japanese destroying the American fleet at Pearl Harbour in December 1941 and capturing Singapore and Rangoon in February-March 1942, the need for wholehearted Indian support in the war became urgent. The Japanese army was just over the Burmese border; the British navy, driven from the South China seas, could no longer protect India's east coast; people were beginning to flee from Calcutta. Churchill's coalition partners, the Labour Party and the Liberals, both favoured a generous offer to the political leaders of India. President Roosevelt, now in the war as Churchill's most powerful ally, urged Churchill to make a liberal statement of Britain's war aims for India.

Under this pressure, Churchill reluctantly agreed to offer India independence after the war in return for co-operation now. And he sent Sir Stafford Cripps, a Labour member of the coalition Cabinet, to sell this package to the Indian political leaders.

Churchill wanted Cripps to fail. He did not want Indians in the government meddling in the running of the war; and he certainly did not want to hand India to the Indians when the war was over. For him the Cripps mission was useful in that it would show the Americans and the Labour Party that every effort had been made to please Congress and that now the war must be prosecuted firmly, with one person in charge and Indian political troublemakers kept out of the way for the duration.

Cripps had two things to offer: a promise that after the war India could frame her own constitution for independence and Britain would accept it, and an immediate invitation to the big Indian parties to join the Viceroy's Executive Council to help run the war. Congress, however, wanted more than this; they wanted India to be handed over at once to a government largely of Indians, who would then wholeheartedly back the British war effort. Cripps tried to make the Congress leaders feel that the offer he was bringing met them more than half way. In a press conference in Delhi on 19 March 1942 he said it was possible to 'turn the Executive Council into a Cabinet'. The Congress leaders pressed him on this idea and Cripps tried in turn to persuade Linlithgow that he could run his Executive Council in a way that could satisfy their demands while not weakening the Viceroy's ultimate authority.

Cripps was an exceptionally clever lawyer and knew he lacked the authority to offer changes in the constitution. He tried to persuade Congress leaders that a representative majority of Indians on the Viceroy's Council would, like a responsible cabinet, be almost impossible for the Viceroy to overrule. But in his enthusiasm to persuade the Congress he got out of step with the Viceroy. Linlithgow complained that Cripps was 'baiting the trap with my cheese' and with Churchill's encouragement began to send secret reports to 10 Downing Street.

Behind Cripps's back, Prime Minister and Viceroy exchanged messages and persuaded the Cabinet in London that Cripps had exceeded his authority. The charge was false. He had merely tried to devise a way for the Viceroy to run his Executive Council, while retaining full reserve powers, which would have met both Britain's wartime needs and Congress's immediate aspirations. But the Churchill-Linlithgow alliance won the day. Churchill took the chair at a meeting of the Cabinet India committee (displacing Attlee) and laid down the policy: Cripps had no power to negotiate, only to present the Government's proposal. A cable was sent to Linlithgow: 'There can be no question of any convention limiting in any way your powers under the existing constitution. . .If Congress leaders have gathered the impression that such a new convention is now possible this impression should be definitely removed.' Cripps was sent a copy.

That was the *coup de grâce*. Cripps already knew that mistrust of him was building up in London and he had therefore felt bound to point out to the Congress leaders the extent to which his offer fell short of their hopes. So his imaginative attempt to reconcile the two sides was turned down by both, the Congress in the following words: 'You... referred both privately and... in public... to a... Cabinet consisting of Ministers... We had imagined that the new Government would function with full powers as a Cabinet with the Viceroy as constitutional head... We did not ask for any legal changes but we did ask for definite assurances and conventions...'. That was the end of the Cripps mission and Churchill did not attempt to conceal his delight. Cripps realised he had been used for the Prime Minister's propaganda to the Americans and kept his resentment to himself. Churchill and Linlithgow in schoolboy celebration of their victory over the Cabinet's emissary privately referred to him as 'Sir Stifford Crapps'.

As usual when the Congress faced dilemmas, Gandhi produced the slogan around which the mass of Indians proved

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New pawns in the chess game for Indian independence: Wavell, Amery, Nehru and Gandhi

ready to unite: a demand that the British should immediately 'Quit India'. It was never clear — probably not even to Gandhi — where exactly he expected the Quit India campaign to lead. He said he wanted the British to leave India to the hands of God — not to hand over power to an Indian government, but simply to go.

Churchill now got his way. The passing of the Quit India resolution provided the excuse he had wanted for locking up the Congress leaders, banning all the Congress committees and forgetting about India's political aspirations. The principal beneficiary of the removal of Congress from the Indian political scene was the Muslim League, whose members were over the next few months invited to form governments in Sind, Assam, Bengal and the North-West Frontier Province. These were the decisive months for Jinnah and the Muslim League in their campaign to split the subcontinent and create Pakistan.

Phase III 1943-45

THE TIME came for a change of Viceroy. Churchill as Prime Minister had been happy with Linlithgow and wanted a successor who would continue to keep the Congress leaders in detention and concentrate on recruitment, production and organisation for war. His choice fell on the apparently safe Lord Wavell, who as Commander-in-Chief in India had helped frame many of Linlithgow's policies. But Churchill did not get what he had bargained for. It was September 1943, the war was going well for Britain and her allies, and Wavell, before taking up the Viceroyalty, said that now was the time for an initiative: the reconstruction of the Viceroy's Executive Council to represent the major political parties. The Cabinet's India committee was sympathetic but Churchill would not have it. Nevertheless Wavell returned to India as Viceroy, clear in his mind that, now India's war machinery was working well, his principal task must be to prepare for rapid constitutional advance and independence after the war. In this purpose his main enemy was Churchill.

In May 1944 Wavell released Gandhi from detention on humanitarian grounds: he had malaria and his wife had died. Wavell wanted to talk to Gandhi about India's political future but received orders from Downing Street not to. Instead Gandhi, isolated now that all his fellow Congress Leaders were in prison and all their national and provincial committees closed by the Government, went to meet his arch rival, Jinnah. Gandhi made a generous offer of co-operation, but Jinnah turned him down flat.

Wavell saw Jinnah's growing intransigence as proof that he had been right about the need for a political initiative by Britain. The Governors of all the eleven provinces agreed with him. Early independence was unavoidable. The only alternative was repression but, after a long, debilitating war, British soldiers could not be brought to India for such a purpose. The Viceroy's Council was now dominated by Indians. Of the 950 men in the elite Indian Civil Service more than half were Indians and the British in senior positions no longer had the will to dominate: they were older than their Indian colleagues, many were near retirement, and they agreed with Wavell that a British initiative to advance India towards independence was urgently needed, as did Sir Claude Auchinleck, the Commander-in-Chief.

So Wavell wrote to London proposing to try again. But the Cabinet's India committee were reluctant even to renew the Cripps offer of major party representatives on the Viceroy's Executive Council. For seven months Churchill refused to let Wavell come to London to discuss his proposal and then, when he was eventually allowed to come, he spent ten weeks waiting about. It was not until May 1945 that Wavell finally got permission to bring Congress and League representatives (instead of individuals chosen personally by the Viceroy, as hitherto) onto his Executive Council.

The timing is significant. By May 1945 Germany had surrendered, the war in Europe was over, Labour had left the Government and a general election was imminent. Wavell had lost face both in London and in India. He was angry at the way he had been treated. His proposal was known to the Labour Party leaders and, if Churchill did not agree to it, might become an issue in the election. Some Conservatives feared Wavell might resign; others, including the Secretary of State for India, Leopold Amery, now spoke up. So Churchill at last gave in.

Wavell returned to India and immediately released the Congress leaders, including Nehru, from detention. He then called a conference at Simla of the 21 main leaders of all parties to agree on the membership of an Executive Council, all of whom, apart from himself and the Commander-in-Chief, would be Indian, to help him preside over the advance to independence. The proposal Wavell put to the Simla conference was generous to the Muslims: the Executive Council was to contain equal numbers of Muslims and Hindus, although the 100 million Muslims comprised only a quarter of the total population. This proposal was accepted by the Congress leaders who hoped to get their hands on the levers of power, but Jinnah rejected it as not giving enough.

What he demanded in addition was audacious and arrogant: that only the Muslim League should be allowed to nominate the Muslim representatives. Since the President of the Congress at that time, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, was a Muslim and since the Congress insisted that it was not a communal Hindu party, its assertion that it must be allowed to include people of any religion among its nominees was understandable. Wavell turned Jinnah down. In that case, Jinnah replied, the Muslim League would not co-operate in the Council.

This was a daring bluff but one which the Viceroy did not feel able to call. To do so Wavell would have had to form an Executive Council dominated by the Congress and, with Churchill Prime Minister and expected to win the imminent general election, such a proposal seemed certain to be overruled. The Viceroy could not form a politically representative council with the League in it nor an unrepresentative council with the Muslim League left out. After months persuading the Cabinet in London to permit his initiative and after proudly announcing it over the radio to the people of India, Wavell now chose publicly to take the blame for its failure. The momentum that was to lead on to the partition of the subcontinent amid massive slaughter had become all but unstoppable. □

Brian Lapping is the Executive Producer of Granada TV's 14-part series End of Empire, *broadcast on Monday evenings from 15 April. His book of the same title is published by Granada, £14.95.*

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Holy fool

Anne Smith

Love and Exile
ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER *Cape* £10.95

'THE FULL tale of any life would be utterly boring and utterly unbelievable,' Isaac Bashevis Singer asserts in his Author's Note to *Love and Exile*. What he offers instead in these four collected pieces about the first 30 years of his life is 'spiritual autobiography, fictions set against a background of truth, or contributions to an autobiography I never intend to write'. He may produce more in the same vein, he says, 'for the sake of some interested readers and perhaps for a potential biographer who may need help in *devising* my life story' (my italics).

Singer is unique — a spiritually omnivorous self-taught man with an unremitting allegiance to the truth. While this turn of mind and the extreme deprivations of his early life might have made some into mystics, visionaries or outsiders, they have made Singer into a thoroughgoing eccentric, and a bit of all three besides: a person with a medieval consciousness; a writer who has lived 50 years in America and still writes in the minority language, Yiddish; a pathologically shy man who has nonetheless managed to embroil himself in many love affairs, and a profoundly religious individual who has challenged God on every front — a holy fool:

> I personally was fully prepared to crown Him with all kinds of possible attributes except benevolence and compassion. To ascribe mercy to a God who for millions of years had witnessed massacres and tortures and who had literally built the entire world on the principle of violence and murder was something my sense of justice wouldn't allow me to do.

God, he concluded, is 'a universal murderer, a cosmic Genghis Khan or Napoleon — eternal, infinite, omnipotent'.

Unless you embrace all the contradictions, you will never arrive at the truth. Probably you will never arrive at the truth anyway. The philosophers are useless; they 'offered various opinions regarding the creation of the world, but I clung to the question "How do they know?".' Singer asks the most fundamental questions, like a child: 'Why slaughter chickens, calves, and kids and bring up people?' — the sort of question one is trained early not to ask, and the want of honest answers to which makes the rest of life something of a farce to those who feel compelled to relate their feeling to their thinking.

But by continuing to ask the questions into his maturity, Singer lays bare the great conspiracy to deny any depressingly logical interpretation of human nature:

> Today the Poles tormented the Jews; yesterday the Russians and Germans had tormented the Poles. Every history book was a tale of murder, torture, and injustice; every newspaper was drenched in blood and shame . . Until that night I had often fantasized about redeeming the human species, but it became obvious to me then that the human species didn't deserve redemption. To do so would actually be a crime. Man was a beast that killed, ravaged, and tortured not only other species but its own as well.

Camera Press

Mystic, outsider, holy fool: Isaac Bashevis Singer

Yet God made man in His own image . . . 'there wasn't nor probably would ever be, any proof that He preferred Gandhi to Hitler, Stalin or Genghis Khan.'

What about the sexual urge in that case? 'Maybe He procreated and multiplied and brought forth billions of angels, seraphim, Aralim and cherubim in His cosmic harem.' Certainly the author's own 'number-one passion was adventures of love, the endless variations and tensions peculiar to the relations between the sexes'. He had 'resolved beforehand to become a narrator of human passion rather than of a placid life-style', and recounts here the sad, funny stories of a number of his early affairs: 'The literary works, the novels, all concurred that a man could love just one woman at a time and vice versa. But I felt that they lied . . . I frequently fantasized about writing a novel in which the hero was simultaneously in love with a number of women.'

In love, *a posteriori* reasoning makes him a subversive too. He says, 'I lusted after women even though I saw their faults, chief of which was that they . . . were amazingly like me — just as lecherous, deceitful, egotistical, and eager for adventures.' He boldly claims that

> . . . our genitals, which in the language of the vulgar are synonyms of stupidity and insensitivity, are actually the expression of the human soul, defiant of lechery, the most ardent defenders of true love.

— though it would seem that Singer, like Donne and many other artists before him, is able to love 'her who is dry cork'.

By being faithful to the truth no matter into what dangerous places it leads him, he has created a book that is funny, frightening and impossible to put down. □

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Guarding home

Martin Shaw

Democratic Defence
PETER TATCHELL *Heretic/GMP* £3.95

SIX YEARS AGO our last Labour government, with a £1 billion secret modernisation of Polaris and a 3 per cent real annual increase in defence spending behind it, was involved in the NATO discussions on nuclear 'modernisation' which were to lead to the cruise and Pershing II decisions and also in preliminary negotiations over Trident. Few knew and fewer cared: there was no 'defence debate'.

All this seems an age ago. Thanks to CND we have a debate about nuclear weapons, and Labour has a non-nuclear defence policy. For this we should be grateful, but a key question — what should be Britain's defence policy? — has been blocked off. CND, as an 'anti' campaign, cannot give a specific answer; Labour, because it is terrified of the electoral damage from radical defence policies, will not. The party is falling over backwards to reassure the defence establishment that 'no nuclear weapons' means more money for conventional hardware.

This failure of our radical institutions places an onus on intellectuals to create a wider defence agenda, and Peter Tatchell's new book helps do just this. Where other contributors — for example, Frank Barnaby's and the Alternative Defence Commission's — have assumed the framework of Western European involvement in East-West conflict, Tatchell places British defence policy unreservedly in a national context. We must decide how to defend our, Britain's, democracy and freedom before we can contemplate our contribution to the defence of others.

Democratic Defence rests heavily on the ideas of the socialist Home Guard pioneer, Tom Wintringham. From him, Tatchell derives a programme of strictly territorial defence through guerrilla struggle and, to a lesser extent, civilian resistance. Not only nuclear weapons, but all offensive strategies, deployments and weaponry are out. Professional armed forces will be drastically scaled down, while an expanded TA — now 'Citizens' Army' — will constitute the bulk of the armed forces.

Wintringham popularised his ideas in the thick of World War Two, when — as Tatchell sees it — the threat to Britain was so real that even the armed forces and the state were momentarily deflected from their imperialist mission to the defence of the 'home base'. The problem with Tatchell's programme for today is that, as he himself admits, 'At present, Britain obviously faces no immediate military threat.' Measures to deter invasion are hardly likely to fire the popular imagination when an attempt to conquer our territory is so unlikely.

What Tatchell has produced is a programme for how an independent socialist Britain, faced not with the present East-West conflict but with dangers which can only be vaguely guessed at, might seek to mobilise its people for national self-defence. This seems to replace the abstraction of the 'Soviet threat' with an equally nebulous concept of potential military dangers. All that can be said is that if Britain ever were seriously threatened with invasion, then Tatchell's proposals would be a useful basis for resistance; alternatively, that if we have to devote a large part of our national resources to such putative dangers, be it 3.5 per cent of GDP

Wes Magee

After the war

It was a July evening, perhaps ten,
when he led me to the air-raid shelter,
a blockhouse camouflaged by apple trees
at the end of our long strip of garden.

We crept inside; a swirling cat-blackness,
mattress-damp air, and then his asthmatic rasp
before a tremulous hand touched my blouse.

Outside again . . . the cool dark, insect drone.
We scanned the night's squadron-formation clouds,
saw wing-tip lights of stars filling the sky.
'Listen,' he whispered, 'listen, for the bombs . . .'

I recollected long-drawn whistles, dulled crumps,
heard now apples thudding in the wild grass
as he shook boughs and hared away, whooping.

Through the gloom his searchlight shout, 'I love you!'
as from the distant main road there came
the sudden clang of a tram homing in,
kamikaze fashion, on the town centre.

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as Tatchell suggests or 5.8 per cent as Thatcher now disposes, then his way is at least a lot less dangerous as well as a lot cheaper than hers.

Tatchell's rich historical account of popular defence points up how far removed from it our dominant military models are. But it is not clear that 'democratic defence' — which was after all a very subordinate theme of World War Two — offers a real way out of the crisis of military strategy in the nuclear age. Might it not be more realistic — and possibly more honest — to acknowledge that all-out war between major states is simply no longer viable?

Such scepticism is not to devalue attempts at alternative defence strategies: rather to suggest that these should be seen less as real military options than as weapons in the political battles which the peace movement and the Left must fight. □

Talking sense

Maurice Peston

Sterling: A Plea for Moderation
DOUGLAS JAY *Sidgwick & Jackson* £15

DOUGLAS JAY has written at least three books in one. It starts with a history of sterling going back to the dim and distant past. It was the sort of thing that we used to read as students, but has now been replaced in the curriculum by econometrics. The story is brought up to date and gradually merges with a robust account of and defence of Keynesian theory and Keynesian policies. That too is excellently done, especially if the author's anti-EEC hobby horse is ignored. He deals particularly well with such fallacies as technical advance and population growth necessarily causing unemployment, inflation always and everywhere being a monetary phenomenon, the identification of the national economy with the individual household and the suggestion that public sector borrowing is inflationary but that of the private sector is not.

If I am inclined to criticise him on this, it would be in terms of his failure to examine the ideological role of the nonsense he demolishes. His criticisms are commonplace within mainstream economics, as he would be the first to admit, but the survival value of what he exposes as garbage is undoubted. A good example concerns government borrowing. It is obvious that if the private sector will not invest enough to guarantee full employment (i.e. it will not borrow enough private sector savings) the government must do so. A refusal to do that guarantees that full employment will not be reached. This was perfectly clear to Peter Shore before the last election and he said so. But it got him nowhere. More to the point, the present leadership has to confront the issue despite the fact that borrowing, while rational, is thought to be a vote loser.

This leads me on more generally to policy. Here, too, I am generally sympathetic to what Douglas Jay has to say but a lot more pessimistic than he is. He argues quite rightly that a move towards full employment involves expansionary macroeconomic intervention by the government. He recognises that there will be an inflationary price to pay and, up to a point, he is willing to pay it. The problem in the first place concerns the numerical magnitude. Output must grow for quite a few years at between 3 and 4 per cent per annum to make a serious dent on unemployment. Jay regards 7 per cent per annum as an acceptable rate of inflation. This means that nominal incomes including wages must rise at most between 10 and 11 per cent per annum. Since in the private sector they are already rising at 7 to 8 per cent per annum, I for one would regard the prospect without an incomes policy as soon involving double-digit inflation.

That logic, plus all the past evidence, shows that an incomes policy is both feasible and desirable. What experience shows is that in the UK a full employment policy on its own is bound to collapse. This has been obvious since Beveridge or before. Either we have a full employment policy with an incomes policy, or we have unemployment. Since 1978 the public, not excluding some trade unions, have chosen the latter. There are now signs that they prefer the former. Either way public sector workers will always be subject to an incomes policy. The choice for them is the crude *ad hocery* of the present imposed policy or an attempt at something more rational and sophisticated such as they have railed against in the past.

This is something Douglas Jay accepts and, indeed, he discusses one or two possible schemes. He reminds us, in particular, of the problem of whether the policy can and should be reinforced by the tax system. This would be a way of fining the parties concerned if wage rises exceeded the norm and were not sanctioned by the arbitration commission. Such an approach would be strongly resented. But it is worth noting that the present government's attack on the trades unions (which is the key to *their* long-run solution to the inflation-unemployment problem) is itself based on fines. Moreover, it is at least possible that it will be based on the imprisonment of union leaders in due course.

It is vitally important that a new approach to economic policy is based on some new machinery for direct and permanent intervention on income. But there is so far no majority for this within the trade union movement, and what support there is is based on absurd terms. (I must make one additional point here. The main beneficiaries of an incomes policy will be workers as a whole. It would seem, therefore, that trade union leaders ought to see it as their responsibility to help devise an appropriate method, rather than leaving the job to the rest of us while they remain free to criticise.) One major trouble is that, even with an incomes policy, the path back to full employment will be agonisingly slow. (That is so even if World War II breaks out again.) A second is that the real income aspirations of many workers will not be met for years. They will be tempted yet again to break away from the norms in a foolhardy pursuit of gains which, if actually reached which is most unlikely, will be extremely short lived.

Up to now the leadership of the Labour Party has spoken on these matters largely in code. Since the benefits of rational policy are so enormous, the time has come for them to speak out. It is no insult to Douglas Jay to say that he represents a voice from the past, albeit a sensible and authoritative one. It is to be hoped that we will soon hear from the men of the present. □

FICTION

Fairy tales

Roger Lewis

The Life of the Party
MAUREEN FREELY *Cape* £9.95
The Doubleman
C.J. KOCH *Chatto* £8.95
Illywhacker
PETER CAREY *Faber* £9.95
Dunn's Conundrum
STAN LEE *Michael Joseph* £9.95
The Taking of Agnès
JENNIFER POTTER *Cape* £8.95

MAUREEN FREELY'S TURKEY is emasculate kith and kin to Anthony Burgess's Malaya. **The Life of the Party**, like *The Long Day Wanes*, is about Westerners in the East: exile suffered for its servants, villas, gin-cocktails, when home would've offered penury in the rainy provinces.

A new arrival at Woodrow College, Istanbul, is Peter Brooks. He is fascinated by the memory of Hector Cabot, a charismatic boozer, whom Margaret says drowned for love of her. This is a fib. Hector is still alive but lost somewhere in Connecticut. Ralph, a dispirited queen, condones the lie — 'twisting the facts, as we all do'. The exiles amuse themselves by concocting myths. Hector had the advantage of being, in himself, a living legend. Peter finds it hard to assemble facts about his fantastic predecessor. He receives giggles, rumours, winks, conjecture. Then, after his wedding, when he is rude to his mother (a tiresome theosophist), Peter learns the biggest scandal about Hector: he was a matricide (by mistake: he thought he was taking a pot shot at a rabid dog).

Has Peter been duplicating Hector's debaucheries? Freely doesn't follow this promising line about the unconscious interplay of past and present. Peter, indeed, is forgotten about. Instead, the narrative back-tracks to tell Hector's story from the beginning. Half-Greek, he is raised in New York by his crazy mother, Aspasia, an Aeschylan Fury whose peasant powers have not been tamed by America. When Amy, her daughter-in-law, is in labour, she sets to with brutal midwifery. Then, imposing herself as head of the clan, Aspasia returns the family to the Aegean. Amy, pregnant again and fearful, escapes to Turkey. Husband Hector, sent in pursuit, decides that he prefers Istanbul to Greece and so stays. His wife had taken refuge with friends at Woodrow; Hector charms them, gets embarrassingly drunk — and is given a job in the maths faculty. He is the life and soul of the party.

Thenceforward, the novel unfolds its anecdotes at a leisurely, almost languorous pace: a romp in slow motion. The cycles of

Contd. on p.34

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Shorter reviews

The Tunnels of Cu Chi
TOM MANGOLD and JOHN PENYCATE
Hodder £12.95

This is a carefully researched account of one of the most remarkable and least reported aspects of the Vietnam war — the tunnel war.

It is the story of the extraordinary tunnel system constructed by the Vietcong in the Cu Chi region — the so-called Iron Triangle — about 20 miles north-west of Saigon. The tunnels ran for miles, often descending to three levels, each sealed from the other by an ingenious series of trap-doors guarded by booby traps. For three years these tunnels were the focal point of the war in the South and they defied all American attempts to find and eliminate them.

Above ground the Americans laid waste to all forms of life. The human beings were shipped off to strategic hamlets, their houses were demolished, the forests were burned and ploughed up. Millions of gallons of defoliant, thousands of tons of bombs and artillery shells were poured onto the Iron Triangle in an effort to render the land uninhabitable. Water and gas were pumped into the tunnels; entrances and exits were dynamited — and yet still the system and its inhabitants survived, emerging at night to wreak havoc.

Mangold and Penycate have based their book on research in Vietnam and America. They have interviewed scores of survivors of the tunnel war and their account makes gripping reading. One of the strengths of the book is that it does not attempt to moralise or glorify. The authors have persuaded the survivors to tell it like it was — the stench, the hunger, the claustrophobia, the madness, the catastrophes as well as the victories. In one NLF unit only four out of 300 men survived the war.

In their introduction Mangold and Penycate feel obliged to say — no doubt with an eye to the American market — that this is a story 'about heroes on both sides'. While it is true that we are introduced to the occasional brave American, the strength of this book is that it is primarily a book about the war through Vietnamese eyes. Although it is perhaps not what they intended, the authors have produced a moving tribute to the ingenuity and heroism of the Vietnamese rice farmers and the terrible price they paid for the liberation of their country.

Chris Mullin

The Essential Jazz Records: Volume I
MAX HARRISON, CHARLES FOX and ERIC THACKER *Mansell* £15

Some years ago I picked up a second-hand copy of a book called *Jazz on Record* — for six shillings, as I see from the flyleaf. It was a useful book. However, it was published in 1960 and over the years its usefulness began to dim. Now it is little more than a curiosity, much like the EPs, 10-inch LPs and 78s which it reviews.

The Essential Jazz Records is a timely (even overdue) update. The two books have much in common, including Charles Fox, the NS's jazz critic, who contributed to both books, and, for those who find trivia intriguing, an orange cover.

The Essential Jazz Records is a collection of reviews of (according to the blurb) the 250 best jazz records which are the foundation of any serious collection. The authors obviously had some difficulty in reducing the choice to 250; *The Complete Jelly Roll Morton*, Volumes 1 to 4 (four LPs), counts as one choice, so readers will need an elastic overdraft.

The book covers the period from ragtime to swing, that is to say excluding all modern jazz, from bop onwards. It lays out its choice in more or less chronological order, starting with the Savannah Syncopators and ending with Jay McShann's band — which had a young alto saxophone player by the name of Charlie Parker.

Any shortlist — even when it is as long as 250 — is always open to criticism, for either inclusions or omissions. The authors have been concerned to draw up a historically balanced list, with some examples of early styles, at the expense of later records. However, I could think of only two other records which I would definitely have included: the Teddy Wilson piano solos and John Hammond's Spirituals to Swing concerts of 1938.

Anyone who is at all interested in jazz will find this an indispensable guide. I was amazed alternately by how many of the records I have already got and by how many I still have to buy. I hope my bank manager isn't reading this.

Mick Hamer

Margaret Mead: A Life
JANE HOWARD *Harvill Press* £12.95

There is a lot of anthropology in gossip: in the petty comings and goings of everyday life; in births, deaths and marriages. Margaret Mead clearly knew this and understood too that such banalities need some explanation if we are to learn anything from them. Not only did she want people to learn from her anthropology, she was a believer in a kind of prescriptive social science which could provide models for how life might be lived as well as descriptions of how it was lived elsewhere. *Coming of Age in Samoa*, the book she wrote about her first fieldwork trip, established that there was a huge public for what she was saying, made her famous and has remained popular ever since. Mead's concerns and methods have found little enthusiasm in British anthropology though and one eminent figure commenting on her Samoan work when it was published in 1928 referred scathingly to her as 'a lady novelist'. The insult might seem less wounding now that Edmund Leach has said that he regards anthropologists as bad novelists rather than bad scientists, but Mead was concerned precisely with the scientific validity of ethnological work.

Since her death in 1978 the validity of Mead's Samoan work has been the subject of a major controversy which spilled out from academic circles onto the front pages of newspapers and television screens. At the core of the argument was Mead's conclusion that culture rather than biology was the determinant of human behaviour. If her original research was faulty then her conclusion could be challenged. The debate has arisen now not because Mead's reputation matters, but because anthropology does not exist in a vacuum and has to connect with a range of political and philosophical ideas.

This relationship between anthropology and society was important to Mead, as Jane Howard's *Life* shows. Unfortunately the book does little more than state this through anecdote and the testimony of friends and colleagues. There is plenty of gossip but not much anthropology here. For a sense of the powerful personality Mead had this is sufficient, but to understand why she became the anthropologist she did, or why that sort of anthropology emerged in the United States, it is plainly not enough.

Tony Beeton

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binges and contrition, high-jinks and crapulousness, quickly pall. Freely hits the right note of comic anarchy seldom. The search for Hector's father, for example, is a botched opportunity. We hear that he was once glimpsed '*in flagrante* with the houseboy' at a party. The author follows this up by repeating it. Fifty pages later, Hector says, 'My father had the houseboy pinned down, right on top of our coats.' The gag falls flat on the rebound.

Attitudes to Hector represent the politics of parties; the parties of politics, in the schisms of Turkey, are what surround the expatriates. Burgess's *The Long Day Wanes* deftly commingled native behaviour with the lives of foreigners. Freely doesn't give much sense of a real Turkey beyond her group of dipsos. The menace of incipient martial law is little more than irksome. A hangover is a greater tragedy. *The Life of the Party*, about frivolous folk, is frivolously thought out. Despite what F.R. Leavis maintained, when form and content are in accord, the result is an equation cancelling itself out. Freely needs more irony. Hector's return, years later, moral and shamed by his past, is wholly unconvincing.

From Turkey to Tasmania. **The Doubleman** houses another vortex of personality. Brod, a guitar-teacher, is a magus through whom others define and shape their lives. He propagates Brian Brady's crooning gift and introduces him to his sinister disciple, Darcy Burr. Koch's narrator is Dick Miller, a victim of poliomyelitis. Crippledom is a kind of exile: it ensured for Dick 'a life at one remove', the solitary's interest in radio, books, Pollock's Toy Theatres.

Make-believe is Koch's subject. Elfland, as he terms it, is a real place. *The Doubleman* taps the indwelling spirits of the landscape. Brady and Burr's folktunes embody the astrological, concealed world by which we're environed: the reality of Rackham and Richard Dadd. Dick, hearing his friends play, 'had a fervent wish to join them; to bind my life to theirs'. He becomes, as a radio producer, their medium to success. The Rymers, as the group is named (after Thomas Rymer, antiquarian, 1643-1713) are, however, too elvish for their own good. Koch's mix of faery and modern pop groups, of tarot and tantrums, doesn't come off. But the re-fashioning of *A Hard Day's Night* as sorcery down under may just work better as a movie (Brod is like the galactic tutors of *Star Wars*), as Koch's earlier *The Year of Living Dangerously* hit excellence in the cinema.

Australia does a brisk trade in subversion. Dame Edna is revenge on royalty; Germaine Greer is revenge on men; Clive James, an angel of devastation, is revenge on everything. Peter Carey's **Illywhacker** is revenge on the novel. It is ungivingly tedious. I read it twice to make sure I hadn't missed the bubbling 'magic, jokes and inventions' promised by Faber. An illywhacker is a trickster. Carey details the life and loves of an 139-year-old con man called Herbert Badgery. A 600-page memoir more deadly than Nixon's (another illywhacker).

Dunn's Conundrum is happier hokum. Stan Lee invents a technological fantasy about the cloning of world leaders and the villainy of computers. Harry Dunn, 'working on his never-ending state-of-the-world report', has developed the Library: no institution of beetle-browed wimps, but a storehouse of knowledge creating and dictating history. The Librarians are the Elect. Such James Bondage is familiar stuff, but I liked CIA agent Walter Coolidge's anthropological investigations of trash cans. People are defined by what they throw away. Scenarios are writ in waste.

Jennifer Potter's **The Taking of Agnès** is also a thriller. It starts sedately with French aristos in Martinique, but a pleasing pepperiness emerges. Agnès, young and lovely, comes to the colony to escort Aunt Lily back to the chateau. The old bird won't budge; Agnès is kidnapped. The conclusion, like that of Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, warns us never to trust the teller — nor their tale. □

PAPERBACKS

Index-linked

Alan Brien

IF I WERE Commissar of Culture, I would withdraw the protection of copyright from all even moderately serious non-fiction, also from some, particularly but not exclusively 19th-century Russian, novels, which did not append an index.

I understand, of course, one simple reason why an index is often not supplied. In almost all contracts, its cost falls on the author not the publisher. And authors are too poor, too mean, too bemused or too ill-informed to accept that the index is worthwhile. But isn't it time publishers realised, to cite only one of many benefits, how much a good index can improve the critical response to their book? Anyone who has ever reviewed will recall the mounting panic, leading to resentment against the work, produced by leafing vainly again and again through the pages for that elusive key quotation.

Admittedly, an index does aid a hostile critic to gut the book — 'Just one mention of... only three references to... Apparently unaware of...' But this is overwhelmingly counterbalanced by the number of supportive pieces, studded with juicy quotations, that an index is bound to encourage.

This month's paperbacks contain two New English Library books about Norman Mailer. Hilary Mills's biography, sensibly entitled **Mailer: A Biography** (£4.95), possesses an index, full without being over-fussy. There is nothing worse than indexes which list the person in whom you are interested as being mentioned a dozen times in the text, only for you to find that on all but one occasion your person appears only as part of a large roll-call.

It also includes the subject of the biography as a separate entry, followed by an alphabetised breakdown of his life and times running to two and a half pages. This is something, mysteriously, not all indexes in biographies provide.

Ms Mills also offers at the back helpful notes identifying each quote, plus all the people consulted, without cluttering the text with little numbers. Unfortunately, the reader's trust in this apparatus is undermined by the mess that NEL have made of the contents pages. Illustrations are said to follow page 240, which they do not. There are no illustrations. Notes and Index are promised on pages where they do not turn out to be found, and at least half of the XXI Chapters are wrongly paginated.

Pieces and Pontifications (£3.95) consists of two collections under one cover, Mailer's essays and his interviews. The latter have been chosen by a Mailer friend, Michael Lennon. It is not clear who chose the former. The second section prints at the end of each interview the date it took place, emphasising that this is not always the date it was printed or broadcast. The first prints no time or provenance, leaving us to search out the publishing, not writing, date from the acknowledgements at the back. Neither section has an index.

Now, I don't want to sound like the mad librarian. Books are not necessarily better than others for the presence of a minimal scholarly apparatus. But the way this pair is arranged, the obvious lack of editorial direction, few signs even of some consciousness that coherence is valuable, makes them less useful than they could be to any reader who likes to keep his or her books as some kind of resource for future reference.

Mailer may have been over-influenced by his name. It is neither basic, nor superlative, but comparative. It must be irritating for someone who cares so much for words and symbols, images and premonitions, to be enrolled as just more male than the average, not the best on the block. He also has, as Ana Gram would appreciate, within him the re-assorted personality of the Normal Marine.

Mailer above all is the writer who, though flawed, possibly flayed, mutilated, handicapped, outfitted with a variety of prosthetic devices, nevertheless appeals to many males as the epitome of the bad boy struggling to escape from within our own rational, progressive shell. We may not want to be such a poseur, equivocator, opportunist, bull-shitter, show-off and pasha ourselves. But we know, and our feelings will be reinforced by these books, that Norman Mailer has explored, discovered, digested and now is transmitting much more, through all his hang-ups, downfalls, ego-trips and bouts of running amok, than we would have found for ourselves in several lifetimes.

In *Pieces and Pontifications*, passages of aggressive banality alternate with moments of flashing insight on almost every page. Opinions that seem initially ridiculous are hard to forget once he has extended and justified them, as with these random samples:

> Every time one sees a bad television show, one is watching the nation get ready for the day when Hitler will come.

> A man who drinks is attempting to dissolve an obsession.

> Just once let somebody say we *don't* have to stand up to the Russians. Let them come here and die of indigestion.

Most of these are off-the-cuff, though there are signs they have been polished later. He works best under challenge, counter-punching rather than attacking. The Pieces illuminate the

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sources of the Pontifications. The Biography goes even deeper down into the roots. What the hell — if you've read this far, you should buy them both.

The Return of Martin Guerre (King Penguin, £2.50), by Natalie Zemon Davis, has 30 pages of notes as well as an index. This is a marvellous mystery tale, almost equalling that of Caspar Hauser, as it seems in outline. Two books were written about it there and then — in Southern France at the end of the 16th century — one by the Judge. It has been retold in many books and inspired one play, three novels, an operetta and, most recently, a film starring Gerard Depardieu.

A peasant husband, married in adolescence, initially impotent, later fathering a child after a magic cure, leaves his 22-year-old wife and disappears. A near look-alike turns up, claims his inheritance at bed and board, is accepted by half the local witnesses, including his supposed spouse, four sisters and two brothers-in-law. Pressured by other relatives, the wife accuses him of personation and the issue is tried in two courts.

Ms Davis was a consultant on the film but worried that too many issues were dodged. She decided to retell the events as history. This was a good idea, except that it does not work. It is precisely imagination and invention that are needed to open up dark corners documents will never now illuminate. Much of her text is also filled with supposition that depends for its persuasiveness on our modern insights. Even as a tale, it is ruined by her determined revelation in the opening pages that the true Martin Guerre turned up during the trial.

By coincidence, since the original Martin's inability to arouse his wife led to the whole chain of events, there is a marvellous book about how 17th- and 18th-century French clergy and later judiciary set about determining whether a man had performed his 'conjugal duty'. At once appalling and comical, Pierre Darmon's **Trial By Impotence** (Chatto, £4.95 & £10.95 hardback) details the fantastic literalness with which the experiments were carried out, the proof of erection before clouds of witnesses and the 'trial by congress' as everyone who could squeeze into the chamber looked on. Reading it I could not help recalling how anti-rationalists, like Malcolm Muggeridge, in these pages, once mocked Masters and Johnson for their gross physical probings of the mechanism of sex. I would like to read his review, since he has now joined the Church that started the whole obsession, of this one. The only thing it lacks is an index.

As does my last book, Evelyn Waugh's **A Tourist in Africa** (Methuen, £3.95 & £7.95 hardback), an unexpectedly endearing and sympathetic tour despite his theatrically paraded prejudices. Many of these appear as excellent jokes, such as the argument that the Left has been wrongly blamed for bureaucracy — 'It is one of the evidences of original sin. The great alluring false promise of the socialists is that the state will wither away'. The young fogies might also note that South Africa provokes his denunciation of 'the infection of racial insanity'. Still, once again it would have been even more enjoyable if the reader could have looked up the places, in anticipation or in retrospect, through an index. □

FILMS

Tricks of the trade

John Coleman

Lori Singer, Timothy Hutton and bird in *The Falcon and the Snowman*

The Falcon and the Snowman (15)
Odeon, Haymarket
Number One (15)
Classics, Haymarket and Oxford Circus; ABC, Edgware Road; etc.
Into the Night (15)
Plaza
City of Pirates
ICA

WHEN WE SAY that truth is stranger than fiction, we probably mean that it is a damn sight more unmanageable. Certainly a lot of what is badly adrift with John Schlesinger's **The Falcon and the Snowman**, scripted by Steven Zaillian from Robert Lindsey's reportorial book about a chalk-and-cheese couple of young Americans who sold top-secret information to the Russians, stems from the need to tidy life's ambiguities into entertainment, albeit with a moral or two.

You can always pack much more into a book than into a film, more talk, more fine-tuned detail, and Lindsey's 'factual' account of the Boyce-Lee case — which ended, after separate trials in April-May 1977, with Christopher Boyce getting 40 years and Andrew Daulton Lee sentenced to life — may well have made greater sense of the incredible affair.

What we have on screen, from the outset, is pretty slick shorthand: a montage of TV clichés incorporating girl cheerleaders, astronauts, Martin Luther King, a bomber releasing its cargo, Robert Kennedy and — finally — Nixon. A boy chorister has been psalm-singing over this (Chris's early priesthood ambitions and seminary days); now Timothy Hutton's ambiguous Chris turns to his ex-FBI father (Pat Hingle) to say, over televised Watergate, 'Can't you admit that just once I was right about something?' His beloved falcon, Fawkes, has already been intercut, as next is his leaving a 'sorry-goodbye' note in a chapel, departing with falcon. Then the bird is aloft, we share its olympian view of below, before it swoops for a kill — and the expected flutter of feathers becomes instead petals showering from flowers carried in a street religious procession in Mexico, with Daulton (Sean Penn) getting out of a bed shared with a tart to enter a tavern and buy some dope.

That feather-petal transition is a trick linkage and it somehow symbolises the tenuous connection that is to exist throughout between Chris — in a father-recommended job which rapidly gives him access to spy-satellite secrets as well as misrouted others that inspire him

Recommended viewing

A regular selection by our critic from films still doing the rounds

Amadeus Peter Shaffer's rich, vulgar and potent fantasy about mediocrity's revenge on genius, sumptuously directed by Milos Forman, with F. Murray Abraham outstanding as Salieri and Mozart's music cascading from the screen.

A Private Function Blissful and British double first as Michael Mowbray steers top-notch cast through puncturingly word-perfect Alan Bennett comedy set in 1947 Yorkshire. Nagged by social-climbing wife, meek chiropodist gets revenge on local unworthies by stealing black-market pig. (Maggie Smith, Michael Palin).

Favourites of the Moon Summary-defying, hypnotic entertainment from Georgian director Otar Yosseliani, making his fifth film during stay in a Paris he packs with pass-the-parcel thieves, tramps, whores, mistresses, anarchists and *flics*.

Beverly Hills Cop Brilliant young Eddie Murphy (*48 HRS, Trading Places*) hoists workaday hunt-the-cocaine thriller into compulsive viewing.

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with disgust and the notion of passing them on to the KGB — and drug-peddling Daulton, who is to become his monthly delivery boy, for cash, to a Soviet embassy official in Mexico City. Boyhood neighbours and buddies they may have been but their vital friendship, as crucial to the occasion as that between Joe and Ratso (whom Sean Penn fleetingly resembles at a moment of torture) in *Midnight Cowboy*, never sparks into credibility.

Beneath the falcon-aloofness of Chris there is something self-serving and shifty, at war with his righteous sentiments; and Daulton is always in danger of stoned-jauntily picking up easy laughs. 'So you're a spy?' says KGB Alex (David Suchet, silkily film-prototypical). 'That's right,' agrees Daulton. 'Do you have some form of identification?' asks Alex, presumably awaiting American Express. One is constantly aware one is watching a movie, underminingly, and never more so than in the repeated cutting to a stuffed owl's unwavering stare or in a concessionary girlfriend for Chris: these are gimmicks in an affair that nips about but does not move.

Les Blair's **Number One**, with a screenplay by his gritty 'Law and Order' collaborator G. F. Newman, would be very good for its first half hour or so, as Harry 'Flash' Gordon (Bob Geldof) divides his time between hustling cockily in S.E. London snooker halls and escaping his debtors, if only some of his dialogue were decipherable. Just as he is getting through and we settle back to enjoy a hard look at what happens to him — forced to turn pro by evil bookie Billy Evans (Mel Smith) and his wheezing minder Mike the Throat — young Harry positively shoots to the top and, accompanied by loving whore Doreen (Alison Steadman), is pocketing everything in sight in the World Championship at the Crucible, Sheffield. Whoa, there. The cry of 'It's all fixed' has been heard ad nauseam and Harry has orders from Billy to throw the final against his arch-rival, Brad (David Howey). Farce follows, with a punch-up round the baize on TV, a commentator avowing, 'This is the sort of behaviour that gives the game a bad name,' our own Ted Lowe breathing, 'The tension mounts,' and guess who taking the title? Some jokey What-Happened-Next captions serve as a P.S. admission that the whole show has fallen apart a while before. Pity.

John Landis's abysmal **Into the Night** has 'screenplay by Ron Koslow' among the credits, but was clearly improvised by a charabanc full of Landis cronies. The singularly unappealing Jeff Goldblum is Ed, cuckolded and insomniac, who drives out to LA International Airport one night in search of he knows not what, which is what he gets. An attractive girl, Diana (Michelle Pfeiffer), the colour of whose hair I shall not divulge though she is not brunette nor yet a redhead, throws herself on his car bonnet and mercy: a gem smuggler, she has just lost her companion to bullets from four Iranian killers, one of whom is Mr Landis. They have picturesque adventures, involving chases, much broken glass, more gore, and David Bowie, Roger Vadim, Paul Mazursky, Jonathan Demme, Vera Miles and Irene Papas. As for Raul Ruiz's **City of Pirates**, the only way I can keep a civil tongue in my head is by ramming it firmly in my cheek. □

ART

Adults only

John Spurling

Forbidden Images
Maclean Gallery, 35 St George St, London W1
Masterpieces from the National Gallery of Ireland
National Gallery
Patrick Caulfield
Waddington Galleries, 34 Cork St, London W1

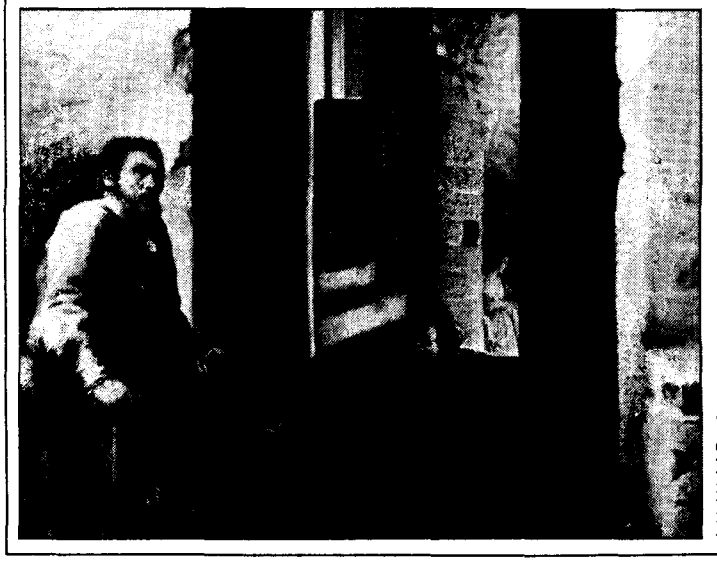
> ENGLISH COLLECTORS in particular seemed to possess houses large enough to conceal a portfolio in some forgotten cupboard of a ducal library without fear of its contents being discovered by, and subsequently corrupting, a curious retainer . . . We hope that this exhibition can be viewed and evaluated with a more balanced approach, and that collectors will not become inhibited by fears of scandalising their butler.

The Maclean Gallery's brave and no doubt commercially adroit attempt to open up a neglected area of art for public exhibition and, by extension, to help us all overcome one of our strongest taboos is not entirely successful. In the first place, the exhibition itself, in spite of its organisers' humorous and unsqueamish attitude to the subject of eroticism in art, reinforces the taboo, since it is displayed behind curtained windows and with a notice on the door forbidding the entrance of anyone under 18. The customers, of whom there are a great many more than is usual for the gallery, shuffle round in a nervous and furtive manner, as if they wished their raincoats looked cleaner or they could, like the butler, enjoy their viewing in the privacy of a ducal library.

In the second place, the art itself — masses of small works crowded up together — was not intended and is quite unsuitable for these conditions. Not that it is pornographic. Most of the explicit images of the sexual act are comic as well as libidinous and although there are many variations — multiple, homosexual (male and female) and solo — none could be classified as perverse or violent. On the other hand, it would be nonsense to pretend that many of these pictures have much purpose other than arousing a specific desire which can hardly be satisfied on the premises, so that the whole thing is rather like being shown a series of pictures of thirsty people drinking beer in a place where drinks are unobtainable.

Of course, a few of the works do contain more than the simple ingredient of sexual appetite. Eric Gill's pantheistic series of engravings, Gerald Brockhurst's powerful etching *Adolescence* and the Japanese woodcuts of partly-clothed lovemaking in extraordinarily complicated positions are all pictures in which the art is as important as the set subject: they offer and satisfy purely visual pleasures of line, colour and design and touch other emotions than concupiscence. But mainly this is either inferior art or workaday caricature and its proper place is not a public gallery but some corner of the home, whether the ducal library or its modern equivalent, the middle-class bathroom. For those who can't afford an original, there is a catalogue with selected illustrations; or, for a complete course in Western erotic art (though it omits any male homosexual images) from the Ancient Greeks to our contemporaries, there is Richard Bentley's book *Erotic Art* (Quartet, £15), published last autumn, with plenty of salty illustrations but a flavourless text.

One of the paintings borrowed by the National Gallery from its cousin the National Gallery of Ireland is a portrait by Georg Pencz of a 16th-century collector holding a small erotic sculpture (the goddess Diana encouraging a satyr). The selection as a whole, though it contains fine works by Titian, Rembrandt, Poussin, Veronese and (probably) Mantegna and Goya, is most remarkable for its oddities: a huge painting of David about to decapitate Goliath by Orazio (father of Artemisia) Gentileschi; a portrait by Gérard of Julie Bonaparte looking every inch the suburban merchant's daughter she was before marrying Joseph and becoming briefly Queen of Naples; a group of Christ with Martha and Mary by Rubens in a sumptuous setting by the younger Brueghel of landscape, fruit, flowers, animals and birds (with a servant preparing a peacock for dinner in the background); and an



'Beggar before a doorway' (detail) by Izaak van Hasselt: masterpiece from the National Gallery of Ireland

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enigmatic but powerful little panel by van Hasselt in which the view from the Bishop's throne in Utrecht cathedral of an arched doorway and spiral staircase in soft buttery stone is disturbed by the presences of a beggar and a prostitute.

The paintings are chiefly from the 16th and 17th centuries (reflecting the taste of Sir Michael Levey, director of our own National Gallery), but there is one 20th-century work, Nolde's brilliantly coloured *Women in the Garden* and one other — apart from Queen Julie's portrait — from the 19th century: Delacroix's *Demosthenes on the Seashore* in which the orator's stentorian efforts to outspeak the waves seem to have flushed out two lovers from behind a rock in the background. This painting, however, is rather easy to overlook, since it hangs next to David's dramatic and monumental sketch for *The Funeral of Patroclus,* which I would guess is the picture the National Gallery will be most reluctant to lay its hands off when the exhibition goes home to Dublin at the end of May.

Patrick Caulfield's new paintings are stronger and more confident than any he has done before. His work was always hedged with irony: 'look at me making two-dimensional patterns out of a three-dimensional world! Look at the tricks we artists use to peddle illusions!' More recently the irony turned back on life itself: 'Look at the illusory spaces we inhabit! Look at the way we let our eyes sell us illusions!' He has not, so far as I know, made any erotic art, but might do it very well, since he has specialised in the ambivalent contemplation of our appetite for material comforts: food and drink, plush surroundings, picture views and gracious living in general. His latest work is almost without irony: the objects, colours, patterns and textures and the theatrical effects of light are presented with dazzling skill as two-dimensional pleasures in themselves. Caulfield seems at last content simply to transform and celebrate: to be an artist without apology. □

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THE FALCON & the SNOWMAN 15

TIMOTHY HUTTON SEAN PENN A JOHN SCHLESINGER FILM

Presented in 85 BRITISH FILM YEAR

GABRIEL KATZKA and HEMDALE present TIMOTHY HUTTON and SEAN PENN in "THE FALCON & the SNOWMAN"
Original Music by PAT METHENY and LYLE MAYS Production Designer JAMES D. BISSELL Director of Photography ALLEN DAVIAU Executive Producer JOHN DALY Based on the book by ROBERT LINDSEY
Screenplay by STEVEN ZAILLIAN Co-Produced by EDWARD TEETS Produced by GABRIEL KATZKA and JOHN SCHLESINGER Directed by JOHN SCHLESINGER
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THEATRE

Half-baked

Benedict Nightingale

What a Way to Run a Revolution
DAVID BENEDICTUS *Young Vic*
The Party
TREVOR GRIFFITHS *Pit*
The Merry Wives of Windsor
SHAKESPEARE *Stratford*

'THE ABSENCE of revolution,' declares a character in *The Party*, 'is not final proof of the elimination of revolutionary potential.' That's obviously true in abstract and, conceivably, practically true of the sad shambles we still remember as the General Strike of 1926. Didn't A.J. Cook encourage his miners with dreams more robust than those recently offered their descendants by Arthur Scargill? Certainly, it's David Benedictus's unexceptionable view that the fires then lit might have led to all sorts of interesting explosions had not a craven TUC leadership, led by Jimmy Thomas, itself been so assiduous with buckets, hoses and sand.

But the most unexceptionable of views doesn't make a good play, or indeed an entertaining musical, as **What a Way to Run a Revolution** incongruously aspires to be. Structure, clarity, tension, momentum need attention too, and haven't sufficiently received it here. It was undeniably diverting to see the Young Vic half-converted into the Commons and to hear so many extracts from so many parliamentary speeches of the day. Here was Baldwin mawkishly invoking 'the angel of peace with healing in his wings'; here was Churchill truculently spoiling for a good, enjoyable fight; here was the voice of Labour, doing little more than abjectly plead with the class enemy to see the striking miners as human beings. But did this add up to an effective or illuminating narrative form?

Quite the contrary. Much of the time it's not at all apparent what's actually going on, out there in the pit villages, the streets, the Cabinet room, the corridors of the TUC. Yet these were the places where the issues were actually decided and, by comparison with them, Westminster was a front, a showcase, a window in which set attitudes were ritually paraded. 'Pay no attention to this lot, not to any of them,' growls Benedictus's narrator, a grim and black-faced miner, of the assembled MPs; and he is of course absolutely right.

But if we follow his advice, and withdraw our attention, there isn't much left to appreciate. A group of undergrads called the Plus Fours appear for the sole purpose of seeming silly: 'I'm driving for the London underground, and it's all rather jolly, we've only had three collisions.' There's satire of London salon life so cursory that it's only by looking at the programme that you know you're supposed to have seen Cecil Beaton and Frank Harris, as well as Noel Coward and Bertrand Russell and other purportedly representative figures. Perhaps it would have been better if Benedictus hadn't directed the show as well as pieced together the story and written the bright, breezy lyrics that Guy Woolfenden has set to bright, breezy music. Certainly, he should have taken a good, long look at *Oh What a Lovely War!*, the imaginative documentaries of Peter Cheesman and his company in Stoke-on-Trent, and the other accomplishments of the genre. As it is, the combined talents of John Normington, Jeffery Dench, Teddy Kempner et al can't disguise that *Revolution* is a mess and a muddle.

Imagine what Trevor Griffiths would have made of the subject. He's always at his best when he roots passionate and articulate dialectic in strongly established situation, as in *Occupations*, *Comedians* and several of his TV plays. **The Party** suffers from being more merely a debate. It's true that we sense the inner flounderings of his main character, a television producer of working-class origins and troubled socialist conscience. Indeed, we sense them more acutely than we did nine years ago, since Griffiths has substituted a more laconic, suggestive opening scene for his original one. But aren't the revolutionary arguments that ripple across his living room still a bit, well, abstract?

But maybe that's part of the point. It's 1968, the barricades are going up out there in Paris and, in here, the British are talking and talking. What, they ask, is the way of change? Is it to be found among minorities in the West and guerrilla groups in the Third World? Or in hard work by a highly disciplined revolutionary party in the working-class communities of the industrial nations? Or in something more spontaneous, more unpredictable, here at home? The questions proliferate and, whatever the reservations, they're put with eloquence by Griffiths himself and with force by Howard Davies's cast, especially by Ian McDiarmid as the dauntingly single-minded Trot originally played by Laurence Olivier. Here's someone who has visibly and audibly spent a lifetime battling against unerringly hostile political weather, a bleak, dour figure as hard as pumice and the same grey colour, harsh in his speech and baleful in his scorn for the class traitors. McDiarmid dares be unlikable, which Olivier didn't, and he's absolutely plausible, which one realises Olivier wasn't.

And while we're talking of the new RSC season, let's not forget its agreeably eccentric start in Stratford. Myself, I take a conservative and perhaps curmudgeonly view of updatings of Shakespeare; but I feel differently about Morningside *Macbeth*s or Ladbroke Grove *Othello*s or M6 *Lear*s than about what Bill Alexander ebulliently offers, a **Merry Wives** that comes complete with teddy boys, a Morris Minor, boxes of Black Magic, a scene under the hair-dryers, another in the local saloon bar, a Bardolph resembling Andy Capp, a Fenton transformed into an imitation beat poet and much else meant to evoke the you-never-had-it-so-good era. Large plays shrink and shrivel when taken so thoroughly to the cleaners, but small ones have less texture to lose and sometimes even gain in brightness.

Such has been the case here. The anachronism works least well with Falstaff, in Peter Jeffreys's performance a shabby-genteel roadhog sporting a canary waistcoat and an RAF moustache. He must, you feel, have been very badly brain-damaged by booze to confuse the semi-detached respectability of Windsor with the Surrey wife-swapping belt, as he seems to be doing. Yet the big comic scenes come off well, thanks to Nicky Henson's Ford, a hatchet-faced TA type apt to turn frantic when his macho is imperilled, and Lindsay Duncan's Alice Ford, a queen of the three-piece suite, and a lively supporting cast. I laughed often and freely — and, with the *Merry Wives*, what more can one ask? □

ROCK MUSIC

Old timers

Barney Hoskyns

ROCK'S TRANSITION into the software age has changed not only its cultural role and function but the nature of sound itself. The number of old rock codgers who have slipped effortlessly into what can only be called *video sound* — antiseptic, pre-programmed 'dance-rock' — is amazing, and they are finding amazing success. So perhaps it is good to see three troupers of tradition — Richard Thompson, John Hiatt and Tom Petty — with new releases that do more than kowtow to the latest clap-track. I emphasise *perhaps*.

Hayseed albino punk Petty actually *does* have a little flutter on the synths, in the very mixed bag that is **Southern Accents** (MCA). With Eurythmic Dave Stewart (odd company), he fashions the haunting 'Don't Come Around Here No More' and the gamble pays off: soulful backing girls and punched waves of synth rhythm make a compelling experiment. An isolated one, however.

From the title and cover, it looks as though Petty has returned to the Dixie roots he abandoned for LA stadium-rock in the Seventies, though only the sweetly elegaic title song has any bearing on the old nostalgia of 'Louisiana Rain' for home and mama and the Southern way of doin' thangs. Opener 'Rebels' sounds like a Confederate Bruce Springsteen but the context of the 'rebellion' (woman troubles) seems dubious to say the least.

The rest of the record suggests uncertainty of direction, with Petty's use of four separate sets of producers going some way to explaining its bittiness. Ex-Band leader Robbie Robertson tackles the lovely closer 'The Best Of Everything', bringing out everything that is likeably, if awkwardly, Dylanesque in Petty's phrasing, but songs like the hurried, sprawling 'Ain't Nothin' To Me' or the hoarily clichéd 'Dogs On The Run' sound like someone sold out of ideas.

I've always been mystified by how ape Mr Petty's countrymen tend to go over our own Richard Thompson. Another doleful record from this master of respectable self-pity will probably be received with their usual droolings while being completely ignored here. Perhaps that is because America's rock-crits are older than ours. For Thompson, like John Martyn, makes records for and about his generation: Sixties survivors whose epoch-spanning shack-ups (like their drinks) are on the rocks. ▷

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Across A Crowded Room (Polydor) is the latest episode in that great drama of human dependence which is his estrangement from wife Linda. (Instead of letters they write albums to each other — Linda's first solo LP is due shortly, with a surprisingly pretty single to trailer it.) It is, like most of his music, dour and worthy in that earnest, English, ex-folkie way, performed in a maddeningly mundane manner by his old Fairport Convention cronies and producer Joe Boyd. It sounds like Dire Straits without the naff suburban romanticism. Only his masterful guitar picking communicates any passion.

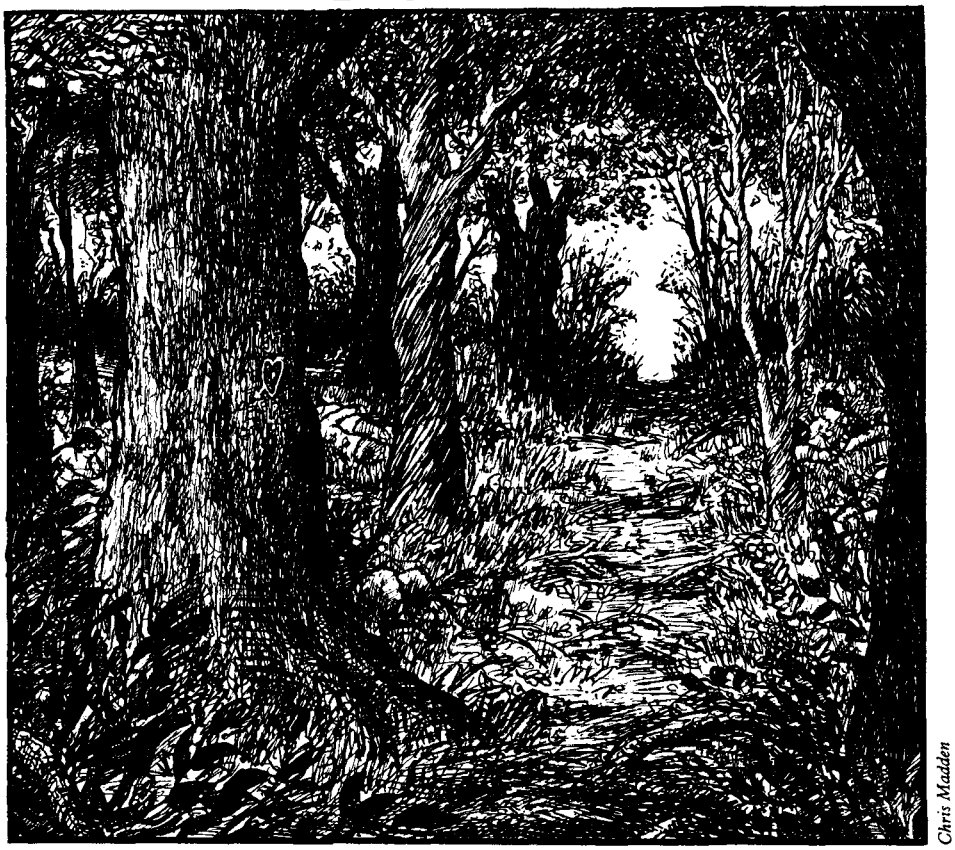
John Hiatt began recorded life as a kind of American Elvis Costello — all snarling tone and smarmy wordplay — and appropriately the Big El guests on one of the best tracks on **Warming Up To The Ice Age** (Geffen), a rousing man-size duet called 'Living A Little, Laughing A Little'. But where Costello's genius extends to a radical reinterpretation of rock sound and arrangement, Hiatt has always settled for the safest and most basic production. His use of macho guitar raunch on, say, 'The Usual', is doubtless parodic, but it cramps his strong black-tinged voice.

Along with the Costello duet, two soul gems redeem Hiatt's flawed enterprise. 'She Said The Same Things To Me' is a cautionary tap-on-the-shoulder in the early Costello/Joe Jackson mould which works perfectly, and 'When We Ran' is one of those pathos-soaked ballads whose very melodic structure keeps anticipating the pain of its lyric.

Three current trends we could probably live without are Go-Go, Jazz-Soul and what we may perhaps call Noise. The Washington DC Go-Go sound is merely a more polite form of George Clinton's Parliament/Funkadelic lunacy of the late Seventies, though I'll grant there are some splendid dance cuts on 4th & Broadway's **Go-Go Crankin'** collection. Jazz-soul, which has grown from the Robin Millar-produced successes of Sade and Everything But The Girl, is extraordinarily bland coffee-table music if **Working Nights** (Virgin), by prime movers Working Week, is anything to go by. Julie Roberts can sing, yes, and Simon Booth can play guitar. And I wouldn't deny that Larry Stabbins charts nice horn arrangments. But there are no songs here.

A lot of noise is being made about Noise — a nihilistic, nightmarish anti-music wherein the pseudo-avant-garde intersects with society's refuse by making violent atonal sounds on damaged guitars and claims to be making statements about American culture. Greil Marcus in a 1983 *Artforum* called this Negation and asked 'whether pop music (after the Sex Pistols) still has a burden of negation to communicate'. The one band he saw as taking up that burden was New York's Sonic Youth, whose **Bad Moon Rising** (Homestead) certainly negates many things that make music easy or pleasant to listen to.

There are other people involved in this widespread return to Noise, from the Australian Foetus to the Scottish Jesus & Mary Chain, but Sonic Youth are among the more literate. Perhaps that is their problem, since their horror-void detonations sound too abstract and premeditated, too much like the work of frustrated NYU film students. □



Chris Madden

In the live of the night

Andrew Lumsden

'YOU KNOW, it is *possible*,' a friend of an antiquarian turn of mind said to me one evening in some European capital or other, 'to make new acquaintances without all the expense of disco, cafe, pub, alcohol.'

He drove me through brilliantly-lit summer streets, pavements crowded with people taking the air at midnight, till we reached the sort of cheaper place he felt I'd like to know. He parked and locked his car. We set off along grass. 'For thousands of years — mind that branch —' (we were now on a moonlit path) 'people must have managed without breweries ... at the Olduvai gorge, or in Java — careful, there's a bit of a drop here — trysting under the tidal moon in a cashless society ... damn, I believe I'm going to have to take my lenses out ... ah, here we are!'

'Here' was a nondescript clearing: nothing to be seen but trees. I felt seriously nervous. We were several hundred yards (and it had seemed a couple of miles) inside one of the city's great parks. It was now a good deal after midnight. The drum of traffic was at a comfortless distance. The moon sailed as if over countryside. I swear the wind was *soughing*.

'We'll split up now,' he said. 'You go down that way. Do you have your watch on? Will you remember the way back? I'll expect to find you by the car not later than, let's see, 2 am, otherwise — see you sometime tomorrow. Good luck. Oh God' (his voice dwindling as he departed the clearing) 'I must go to the occulist's Monday ...'

There was a sward the way he'd told me to take, a broad swathe between jet-black shrubberies and grey and silver tree-trunks. Every 30 feet or so I turned right round, to check on my retreat. I remember muttering to myself 'The eyes have it, the eyes have it', clinging to feeble wit, as if to a raft. And: 'This is another fine mess I've gotten myself into.'

As nothing happened and no one appeared I began cautiously to cheer up. My antiquarian was quite right. Of *course* people must have turned out on summer nights, drifting along hedgerows and through coppices, when there was nowhere else to go. All those Lovers Lanes ... this was a thoroughly respectable undertaking, wandering the woods, even if the town was now around the trees, instead of the trees around the town.

My fright fading, the woods began to populate, perception opening like a door. Those had been low voices, surely, behind that sweeping canopy of leaves? That menacing clot of a shrub, it had *beckoned*, hadn't it? Those specks of light down there between high white tree-trunks, lights dancing and arching ... cigarettes? That moonshine glimmer that had seemed briefly to move sideways, chest-height, far up this wide path I was sticking to so nervously ... a white singlet?

And so at last I plucked up the courage to leave the broad thoroughfare and take to the straight and narrow trails that led in and out of glades, and where indeed, as promised, there were people to be met and acquaintances, perhaps sometimes very brief ones, to be made without the urban tedium of the bar, the crowd, the yelling voices. Silent night ... the best things

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in life free once again.

It's another of those modern deprivations that everyone can't have their summers in the woods. 'Man is born free,' I say sadly (men, anyway) 'but is everywhere in bed.' When I'd learned the hang of it — put your folding money inside your shoe under the sole of your foot before you enter the woods, for there are young Genets there who will take both you and your busfare — I thought how beautiful a spectacle it can be: the quiet ballet, the ceremony of slow voiceless movement, eye cautiously seeking eye in the live of the night. Never mind the lust, check the visuals.

Sitting against some tree-stump, or even on a bench when one has been thoughtfully provided for daytime use, idling, my thoughts have sometimes loitered off towards Shakespeare, as whose don't when there's nothing to attend to. Unveiling myself at last as A.L. Rowse's Dark Gentleman, Mycroft Holmes to his Sherlock, I believe I can disclose some truths about the Bard which scholars in their cells, who have never been down to the woods to play, are still omitting from their texts.

Falstaff, who 'babbled o' green fields' as he lay dying, was remembering the time when he was young and slender and desirable in the outdoors. Vast, asthmatic, red with drink, by the time we meet him, he is surrounded by those Pistol-packing rentboys, when he falls helplessly in love with the prince, a knowing lad who flirts with him, only to reject him at the end, as of course he was always going to. Elizabeth I, another knowing prince, commands a sequel in which the wives of Windsor queer-bait the old duffer, who thinks they haven't guessed his secret, that he's no man for women at all. They take him at last to the sexy woods, mocking him where desire should be most truthful. The third instalment of his life, in which Shakespeare showed Falstaff reconciled to his own nature, and much trimmer after working-out, *The Two Gentlemen of Epping Forest*, is unfortunately lost.

The antiquary who led me into the midsummer night's dream of the woodlands has given it all up. He met someone in a night-club. They've settled down to monogamy. He talks now of the Sumerian temple marriage and of paleolithic indications of pair-bonding in the Negev, and denounces 'all those tree-roots that jab you in the back, and the nettles you can't recognise in the dark'; and tells you proudly of his fouton.

I know what he means about the enmity of tree-roots. I became too confident about returning to the land at the peak of my enthusiasm for it, and on my last a.m. jaunt into the urban forest on a summer's night, mentally crowing over the slugabeds and the dwellers in close-packed clubs, I caught my ankle in an exposed loop of root.

I'd been walking too fast, not even giving my night-vision time enough to adjust, on a down-hill track. Hurtled forward, in anguish from the pain, I plunged down the incline faster and faster, laughing with the pain, tears streaming down my face, travelling on one foot, arms whirling. Surely I must have been an appalling spectacle as I rounded a bend, and an innocent stranger stopped dead at the sight of me.

Yet we became acquaintances. If Cleopatra could hop with success, so it seems can we all. □

TELEVISION

Hugo Williams

Luminous

WHAT A BRILLIANT creation Edward Lear would have been if he hadn't been all his own work. In **On the Edge of the Sand** (BBC-2) Alan Plater makes happy use of the nonsense poems to find the metaphorical truth in Lear's lonely, peripatetic life on the margins of society, health and fame. It is the type of fictionalised biography that suggests the child is father of the man: not a bad idea in Lear's case. We see him as a boy talking Learishly to the older sister who brought him up: 'Does Mama really not love me?' 'Of course she does, but she has so many children.' (She had 21) 'Is it because of my demon?'

Lear was epileptic, a fact which inhibited him romantically and socially. He always felt more at ease in nurseries than drawing rooms. 'I see evidence of great happiness among my grandchildren,' observes his host Lord Derby, 'and on making enquiries I find that it is your fault.' (Lear is not the only one to talk like Lear in this excellent film.) We see him improvising limericks for a host of little darlings while simultaneously illustrating them with the drawings we all know so well. Even if it never happened that way it was a good explanation of Lear's sometimes disappointing habit of repeating his first lines. He had his hands full at the time.

We see him getting on with the serious — but dull-looking — business of landscape painting: 'Millais, Rossetti and Hunt', he asks his friend Tennyson, 'are they a reliable firm of solicitors?' While the far more lively pictures of his poetry ring through his head and the soundtrack, as if relaying a secret, metaphorical life to us from the coasts of Coromandel or wherever. 'Do be careful,' begs his sister as he sets off on his travels once more. 'Certainly not,' he replies. 'I am much too sensible to be careful.'

As the excellent Robert Lang's make-up and beard get more complicated, so Mr Lear becomes more lonely — 'I am tired of living singly / on this coast so wild and shingly . . .' — and seeks advice on the subject of a wife from Tennyson's wife Emily. How telling is his relaxed expression in the company of the safely married Emily as she advises him to take two pairs of trousers to his prospective in-laws: she has spoken to him in his own language. How tense by comparison is the interview with Gussie Bethel as he tries the same language on her, asking her if she can sharpen pencils. 'Of course not!' she replies, understanding all too well.

When Gussie, now widowed, visits him in Corfu to tell him she has learnt how to sharpen pencils, it is too late. 'You really like my nose?' asks the creator of The Dong with the Luminous Nose. 'It is a very acceptable nose.' 'Well, my handkerchief embraces it regularly through the winter months. But there are no other months any more.'

This was imaginative empathising over and beyond the call of TV. Again soon, please, so we can have our Lear out ready next time and our handkerchief.

'TO BE BORED by friends is something awful,' says Rakitin (the excellent Ian Charleson) in Turgenev's **A Month in the Country** (BBC-1).

'When we talk I sometimes feel we are making lace. Lace is a fine thing, but a drink of water on hot days is much better.' However much these idle Russians bore each other on holiday, their talk is always new to us and more like a refreshing drink than lace. In Bill Hay's mellifluous production the play is more like a piece of music than water or lace. Characters come and go with effortless engineering, circling one another, revealing their feelings as much through their movements round the elegant drawing rooms and gardens as through what it is that they say.

The production is more like a film than a play in its use of actual music to fold, accentuate or turn to smoke Constance Garnett's ideal translation. Natalya is a beautiful and cultivated married woman whose primitive instincts and amorality are revealed as she falls in love with the family's new young tutor, Beliayev. This is the sort of part normally played by Terence Stamp in films — the beautiful innocent who passes through a bored household like a brush fire, leaving the poor young birches standing up scorched and black after he has left. Except that in this society men take the train to Moscow rather than satisfy any of the desires they stir up in the womenfolk and the only remotely libidinous scenes are conjured to mind from verbal ambiguities. 'I can't see you,' says Natalya's ward Vera, who is also in love with Beliayev. 'I want to see how you tie the tail on.' The remark was given its full alternative meaning in this production by the diminutive size of the kite in question, which couldn't have obscured anyone's sightlines unless their back were turned at the time and their petticoats raised.

I wonder, is there a whole pornographic subtext to Turgenev which Tony Harrison will one day unearth for the National? I doubt it somehow. There are moments of pathos but, in the end, the effect is that desired by Chekhov for his plays: that of comedy. As the chorus mounts of selfless male avowals to quit the house for the doubtless more satisfying and tranquil life of Moscow, so I was reminded of the old Nichols and May take-off of *Brief Encounter*: 'I'm going away! I'm going to be a dentist in a leper colony!' Or was it the ironical presence as Natalya of Eleanor Bron, whose satirical mugging is never far under the surface — in my mind anyway — that gave the production its edge of absurdity?

At the end of this month in the country, we see Natalya sitting alone in her garden, following what may have been her last season — the birch trees showing autumn in the background — while the remaining older gentlemen of the household get on with the usual business of flirting with the serving girls. □

Work in Progress will be back next week.

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Weekend competition

No 2869 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Hilaire Belloc's Cautionary Tales mostly seem to be aimed at the imprudent young. Could we please have Cautionary Tales in which the mature get their come-uppance? We have in mind Trade Union leaders, Church leaders, Captains of industry, Cabinet Ministers, media pundits, etc. Max. 12 lines of verse by 1 May.

No 2866 **Set by A. Boteman**

Conversations in the Elysian Fields between two shades with the same surname.

Report **By Babe Bio**

Karl and Groucho were an obviers pear, so nacherally most of you chose them. But even those who thort up such goodies as Dorothy and Charlie Parker (neat), Oliver and Thomas Hardy (great), Jesse and Henry James (terrific) were so exorsted by *having* the idea that they couldn't do anything with it. Nine pounds each to the poeple below (including the best of the Marxists) for keeping it up till the end.

T. S. Eliot: Hello George.
George Eliot: Why, I'd have recognised that American accent anywhere. It's Gertrude Stein, isn't it?
T.S: Oh, Madame Sand, don't de Musset me about.
George: Your fatuity requires no response and deserves little better than indifference.
T.S: I see you've flicked through 'The Waste Land'.
George: I journeyed between the oases. . .and a hard time I had of it.
T.S: I'm flattered by your familiarity with my texts. I must confess to having read all your novels before I was twelve.
George: I'm not sure whether that indicates excessive precocity on your part or inordinate puerility on mine.
T.S: Pax. Let's be friends. We have a great deal in common.
George: What?
T.S: Scepticism. . .critical insight. . .faith. . . Anyhow, I wish I'd written *Middlemarch*.
George: You're as circuitous as a Jesuit, Tom.
T.S: As a cat, Marian. (*Softly*) A tomcat. . .
George: Well, Macavity, what are you really after?
T.S: Sex?
George: I always thought you were so terribly cerebral.
T.S: Only in my bloody brains, Marian.

RUSSELL LUCAS

Thomas Hood: Good day, my Earl of Huntingdon, well known throughout the land, whose merry band was Robin-led, and for their robbin' banned.
Robin Hood: Ho, master, gladly do I but greet you, for methinks you may perhaps be one of mine descendants.
Thomas: No, no, you are a shade out there — although, in here, a shade. But you were made for marryin', and Marian, a Maid.
Robin: Aye, sire, that is perchance indeed the truth. Ho, though, I find your speech but confusing. Now see mine bowmanship!
Thomas: I — phew! that was an arrow-squeak; I take your point, and shiver. Please take it out from me, for I am certainly a-quiver.
Robin: Egad, methinks mine aim be a mite off. Mine apologies.
Thomas: No, sir, you have not worser bowed, though true abode, it's true, you have here. Now since you I like, I'd better soon like yew.
Robin: Minstrel, I fear your bull is to be shot at.

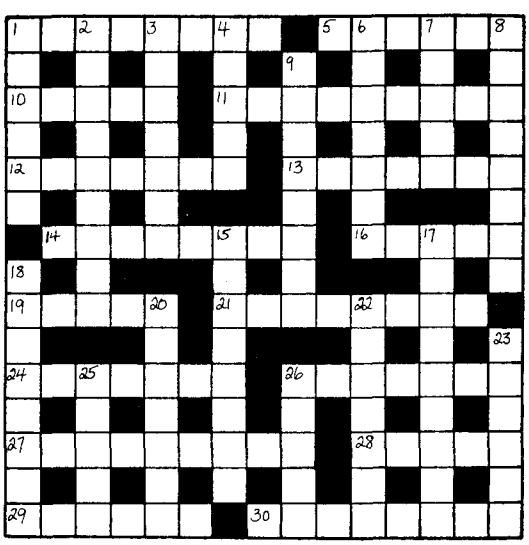
WILL BELLENGER

Groucho Marx: Well, well. And they said God wasn't an old man with a long white beard. Put it there, pal. Don't you find it heavenly up here? No noise, no smoke, no loose women. On the other hand, who wants to live in Peoria, Illinois?
Karl Marx: Listen. Don't be confused. There is no God, no heaven, no hell. All this is pure illusion, an ideological effect.
Groucho: No kidding. Well it's not my idea of paradise. Not a wealthy widow in sight. And besides, there's no tobacco store here. I'm used to smoking cigars with abandon. Say, you wouldn't have a spare Havana, would you?
Karl: Pah! Don't speak to me of Cuba. I spend all my life explaining the principles of revolution and nobody listens. Peasants! Peones! Cigar-rollers! Everyone thinks they can make a revolution except the industrial working class.
Groucho: Oh, I get it. Some kind of red. Well that's okay. I've been under a few beds myself in my time. And believe me it's no fun. When you've read one mattress label, you've read them all.
Karl: *Himmel!* Is this some kind of joke?
Groucho: Who knows? You'd better ask the scriptwriter. He just moved out to Beverley Hills. That's like a ghetto for successful thieves.
Karl: You mean capitalists?
Groucho: No, I mean plagiarists.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Weekend Crossword 1476

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1476, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 30 April.



Name _____

Address _____

_____

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ACROSS

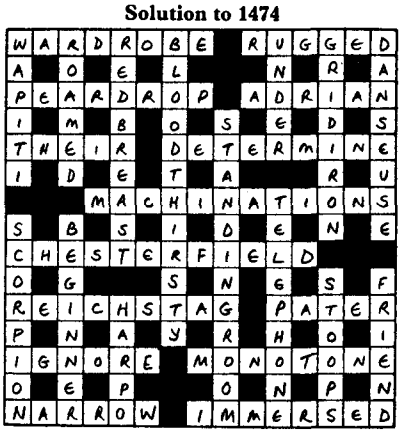
1. Part of Europe where the soil is held by a freed serf (8)
5. Spells of writing after holiday places (6)
10. Bird almost getting dressed (5)
11. Restaurant with a band beside the lake (9)
12. Set as a saint (7)
13. Helen's mother goes back with a letter for the theatre (7)
14. Graffiti possibly spoil a college (8)
16. A woman without time for modesty (5)
19. Tree used for a label everyone recognizes (5)
21. Avoid favourites returning to join the team (8)
24. An animal, not a lover embracing the modern woman (7)
26. Official backing to hold an oaf as one who disobeys the rules (7)
27. If we abandoned an American or European, it would be more serious (9)
28. Ammunition for canon (5)
29. Ball which shows there is nothing in getting Kerry out (6)
30. One who is fast, wearing no clothes (8)

DOWN

1. Seek food pro tem? (6)
2. Make a judgement and turn irate with brat (9)
3. Where men go astray in the gloom (7)
4. Fanatical through being born during enemy attack (5)
6. Criminals who discover a note about a woman following us (7)
7. Fight for a small piece (5)
8. An example of animals turning up in a cage after the shooting starts (8)
9. Chased round an animal and caused annoyance (8)
15. Funny song about Ireland being associated with pigs (8)
17. Being amazed we stopped work at the beginning of the afternoon (9)
18. Resourceful Ann? (8)
20. The last is always included in the next remedy (7)
22. Whip needed when cur goes astray (7)
23. One who transports goods is concerned about the river rising (6)
25. He is ungenerous and goes back in here simply to make money (5)
26. Leading with short right in hand (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1474



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PUBLIC TRANSPORT. CILT (Campaign to Improve London's Transport) require two workers to complete team of four at their GLC-funded Research Unit. Media or research skills desirable. One position includes office administration. Salaries £9,500 p.a. approx. (or part time). Closing date 13 May. Contact CILT, 3 Stamford St, SE1. 01-928 9179.

OV SELECTION have a number of vacancies for temporary & permanent office staff with typing skills. We welcome enquiries from mature people as well as College leavers. Phone Odette Veazey, OV Selection (Emp. Agy), *Abford House, 15 Wilton Road, London SW1V 1LT.* 01-828 8345.

PEACE MOVEMENT: Finance Worker. Peace Pledge Union seeks pacifist for part-time financial work, including recording and handling all daily financial transactions, in liaison with Treasurer and staff. 20 hour week, salary £3,000. Book-keeping ability required; *typing ability an asset. Application form/Job* description available from Lucy Beck, PPU, 6 Endsleigh Street, London WC1. Tel. 01-387 5501. Closing date: 13 May.

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SOCIETY OF TELECOM EXECUTIVES

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WHAT HAVE Tories, SDP, Labour, Leninists and Trotskyists in common? — They all agree that in one form or another the present social order is here to stay. We alone are opposed to it and seek to replace it. For free literature write: Socialist Party of GB, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Phone 01-622 3811.

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LISTINGS

FRI 19 APR

GUILDFORD 'Wenzani-Women, Apartheid & Exile' 7pm Bellerby Theatre. Food/Tickets: £3/£1.50 UB40. **Org. Guildford Labour Party 0483-63454.**

BOLTON Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom. Spkr. Nancy Jaeger plus video. 8pm Bolton Socialist Club, 16 Wood Street. **Details: Bolton 399494.**

BATTERSEA Latchmere Baths Defence Fund Benefit Dance 8-midnight York Gardens Community Centre, Lavender Rd, SW11. Adm. £2/£1.50 UB40. **Org. Battersea Labour Party 01-223 7961.**

SUN 21 APR

LEEDS 'Jewish Perspectives on Nuclear Arms' Nat. JONAH (Jews Organised for a Nuclear Arms Halt) Seminar 9.30am-5pm. Adult Education Centre, Springfield Mount, Leeds 2. (Part of Univ. campus). Workshops, vegetarian lunch, creche. Adm. £8/£4 UB40. **Details: JONAH, 14 North Park Grove, Leeds 8.**

MON 22 APR

LONDON 'Feminism & Class Politics' Spkr. Michele Barrett. 8pm Upstairs at The Green Man, Berwick St, W1. **Org. Socialist Society, 9 Poland St, W1. 01-734 8501.**

LONDON 'Population & Famine' Spkrs. Trevenan James of Population Concern, Govind N. Deodhekar, Nat. Secular Soc. 7pm The Library, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1. **Org. Nat. Secular Society, 702 Holloway Rd, N19. 01-272 1266.**

TUES 23 APR

LEIGHTON BUZZARD 'Freedom & Democracy' Spkr. Tam Dalyell & 'Labour's Policy for Bedfordshire' Spkr. John Tizzard. 8pm Lecture Theatre. Vandyke Upper School. **Details: LB 385517.**

WED 24 APR

BROMLEY 'GLC Funded Groups fill a gap in Bromley' Spkrs. Jean Tatham, Jenni Fletcher, Jonathan Fryer. 8pm New Village Hall, Orpington. **Org. Bromley Keep the GLC Campaign, 38 Park Rd, Bromley, Kent.**

LONDON Rally & lobby against Enoch Powell's Bill on *in vitro* fertilisation and embryo research, House of Commons. Spkrs incl Jo Richardson, David Owen, Peter Furnham, & from National Abortion Campaign, Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign, Abortion Law Reform Assn, National Assn for the Childless, Women's TUC. **Also demo Sat 27 Apr,** starting Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1pm. **Details: ALRA 01-359 5200, NAC 01-405 4801, WRRC 01-251 6332.**

LONDON 'Sexual Harassment at Work' 1pm City Centre, 32/35 Featherstone St, EC1. (2nd Floor). Women only. **Org. City Centre 01-608 1330.**

THURS 25 APR

LONDON Water — Privatisation, blocked drains, Fluoridation — the Future?' Spkrs. Roy Watts, Thames Water Authority, Allan Roberts MP. 4.30-8.30pm Grand Cttee Rm. House of Commons. **Details: SERA 01-429 3749.**

FRI 26 APR

ELMBRIDGE Nuclear Question Time Spkrs. Bruce Kent, CND, Geoffrey Pattie, MP, Malcolm Harper, UNA. 7.30pm Rydens School, Hersham. Adm. Free. **Org. Elmbridge CND.**

LONDON 'Is State Abolition & Worker's Self-Acticity Possible?' Spkrs. Bob Arnot, Bob Jessop, John Palmer. 7.30pm University of London Union. **Details: Socialist Society/Critique 01-734 8501.**

MOLESWORTH Peace Camp. Cycle rides from all over Britain will converge on USAF Molesworth. SE Ride starts in London on 22nd Apr with full back-up. (Money raised is for OXFAM & Campaign Against Arms Trade.) **Details: Ride for Life, c/o Brixton Cycles, 433 Coldharbour La, SW9 01-671 1965/733 6055.**

SAT 27 APR

HACKNEY Grand Spring Bazaar 11am-4pm Hackney Trades and Labour Hall Club, 96 Dalston Lane, E8. **Org. Hackney South and Shoreditch Constituency Labour Party.**

OXFORD 'Slavery' History Workshop 2-day seminar with Robin Blackburn, Belinda Coote, etc. Queen Elizabeth House, 21 St. Giles. Tickets £6/£4 UB40 Creche. **Details: HWCSH, Ruskin College. 0865 56041.**

LONDON Preparation Meeting for UN Conf. on Women Nairobi 1985. 1-6pm Tolmers Sq Community Centre, Foundry Mews, NW1. Women only. Disabled access/creche/ refreshments. **Details: King's X Women's Centre, 71 Tonbridge St, WC1. 01-837 7509.**

JORDANS (Bucks) 'Christian Peacemaking in a divided Europe' 10am-5pm Village Hall. Spkrs. incl. Jan Ter Laak (Pax Christi, Netherlands) on Poland; Peter Jarman (Quakers) on USSR; Stephen Tunnicliffe (Anglican) on Hungary. Registration Fee £4/£1.50 UB40 to **Stephen Tunnicliffe for END, 4 The Square, Clun, Shropshire SY7 8JA. 058-84398.**

FORTHCOMING

29 APR LONDON 'Defend a Women's Right to Choose' — the Powell Bill — discn. & seminar. 7.30pm The Florence, Florence St, N1. **Org. IS&F Labour Party Womens Section.**

30 APR LONDON 'Child Sexual Abuse Preventive Education Project' Radical Health Visitors Grp. meeting 7pm Old Coffee House, 49 Beak St, W1. **Details: RHVG C/O 9 Poland St, W1.**

30 APR LONDON Britain/Vietnam Assoc. Grand Victory Celebration 5.30pm Main Conference Hall, County Hall, SE1. Adm. by ticket only from **Mrs. Joan Yuille, BVA, 52 St. John's Park, London, SE3 01-858 7930.**

1 MAY LONDON 'GLC — Lorry Ban' 7.30pm County Hall, SE1. Spkr. Nick Lester. **Details: SERA 01-439 3749.**

1 MAY LEIGHTON Grand May-Day Gala 6.30pm Market Cross Leighton Buzzard. **Details: Leighton & Linsdale Labour Party LB 373814.**

1 MAY LONDON Green May Day — Eco-Socialist Celebration starts 1pm at LSE, Houghton St, WC2.

4 MAY LONDON Creating Conditions for Peace — the Role of Education. 10am-4.30pm Quaker International Centre, 1 Byng Place, WC1. **Details: Mildred Mashedar, 13 Well Walk, NW3. 01-435 2182.**

4 MAY BIRMINGHAM 'Reaching the public' day school. 9.30am-5.30pm, St Francis Hall, B'ham Univ. Adm £2 CND Peace Group reps/£1 UB40. **Org West Midlands Region CND 021-643 4617/632 6909.**

9 MAY ROTHERHAM Public meeting on Civil Liberties. Spkrs Kevin Barron MP, Mehmet Ali Dikerdem, Anne Rittingale. 7.30pm, Rotherham Library & Arts Centre. **Org. Rotherham CND. Details: Sue Chant, Rotherham 554087.**

9 MAY LONDON MI5's official secrets — showings of 20/20 Vision video documentary & discn led by Cathie Lloyd of Cities of London & Westminster Public Order Research Grp. 8pm, Paddington Labour Club, 39 Chippenham Rd, W9. **Org Miners' Support Grp for Westminster & the City/CLW PORG.**

11 MAY LONDON Spring Conference 'Labour and Peace'. 9.30am-5.30pm, Birkbeck College, Malet St, WC1. Adm £1, all welcome. **Org Society for the Study of Labour History. Details: David Englander, Arts Faculty, Open University, Milton Keynes.**

Sorry, but we can't accept entries over the phone. Entries must be received by Friday preceding issue date. We reserve the right to exclude items without giving reasons and are not responsible for errors. Space is strictly limited so if you definitely want your item to appear, we suggest you book it as an ad under the appropriate classified heading. See main heading for rates, etc.

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GROUPS/ MEETINGS

POPULATION & FAMINE. Meeting at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1, on Monday 22 April at 7 p.m. Speakers: Trevenan James of Population Concern & Govind N. Deodhekar of National Secular Society. Organised by the National Secular Society.

SHAW SOCIETY. The Rt Hon. P. K. Archer, QC, MP on 'John Bull's Other Island'. Friday 26 April at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. Coffee 6.30.Meeting 7 p.m.

THEOSOPHY: *S.a.e. for free pamphlets, book* list, programme of activities. Public talk Sunday 21 April 8 p.m. 'Does Death End All?'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

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ATTRACTIVE, HUMOROUS female, 34, seeks similar male (possibly Jewish, possibly not) as interested in music, literature, cinema, theatre and politics as she is. (London). Box (13)0526.

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EDUCATED MAN, 51, seeks unattached, sensuous female upto 65 for fun and friendship. Large ladies welcome. *Nationality immaterial.* All replies with phone number please. Box (16)0666.

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INTELLIGENT, SLIM, attractive female (32), Indian origin, separated, one child of mixed marriage. Enjoys music, cinema, books, Guardian reader, seeks caring, solvent male with similar interests. View — marriage. London area. Box (16) 0659.

INTELLIGENT, SUCCESSFUL, attractive(?) professional woman, previously long-time wife and mother, ex-public school, divorced, early *50s, impeccable credentials. Seeks top line* male counterpart, socially polished for civilised relationship, perhaps pooling of resources. Resident Heart of England. CV please. Box (15)0609.

IS THERE anyone out there? Energetic, creative lady 50s, good looking, unsatisfactory marriage, adventurous painter, amateur musician, anarchic sense of fun, seeks emotional and artistic outlets with male kindred spirit. Box (16)0675.

LONELY LONDON Guardian woman, middle-brow interests, socially, politically concerned, sensitive, self aware, seeks available, unattached, non-smoking, intelligent, warm male, fifties, for growing relationship. Box (16)0651.

MALE 42, married (physically separated), *missing warmth and intimacy, seeks female,* 30-42, with openness, sensitivity and a capacity to care and understand, for loving, hopefully lasting relationship. London. Box (16)0677.

MANCHESTER GUY (30) slim, pleasant appearance/nature. Likes arts, outdoors, cycling. Seeks slim, gentle, warm female. Photo appreciated (returned). Non-smoker. Box (16)0652.

NEED THE attentions of a loving man? Travelled business man, 40, slim, tall, seeks modest, affectionate lady of position and taste for occasional meetings. Long term relationship possible. Business interests welcome. Sense of humour essential. Political and religious views respected. Age *unimportant compared to a warm and caring* nature. Enjoy dining, theatre, countryside, good company. Suffolk — willing to travel. Box (16)0658.

OCCASIONAL ESCAPISM sought with *intelligent, caring, sensual lady, age,* nationality unimportant. Man (40), offers gentleness, solvency and skills acquired in the East. Box (16)0669.

PETITE, ATTRACTIVE and educated Chinese lady; single, unattached, seeks intelligent, established executive/academic, 35-45 yrs, for serious, lasting relationship. Single fathers welcomed. London and surrounds. Box (16)0639.

PROFESSIONAL MAN, late forties, separated, attractive, sociable, lively, good sense of humour, interests include: archaeology, painting, wildlife, seeks attractive woman for easy-going relationship. Midlands. Box (16)0667.

PROFESSIONAL WOMAN, 49, interesting career, needing extend social life, varied interests, wishes to meet unattached, personable man, 45-55. Box (16)0676.

RELAXED, WARM, s/div. gentleman enjoying *books, theatre, sought to correspond with by* div. female, 45. Into politics, philosophy, theology and the odd night out. Box (16)0635.

SARTRE TYPE looking for Simone de Beauvoir. Left-wing intellectual theoretical physicist, with deep interest in the arts, classical music, philosophy etc. seeks sympathetic female for loving relationship. I am 27, 5' 4" and cuddly. All letters answered. London area. Box (15)0627.

SCRUFFY COUNTRY Yokel, male 27, realises you can make an even bigger mess with two people. Seeks female, 20-32, Gloucester/Bristol area. Interests: ecology, cycling, potholing, happiness. Box (16)0661.

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SINGLE PLUMP, attractive, Malaysian female, 45, seeks genuine left-wing male, *interests in Third World countries,* food, travel, and long-term caring, committed relationship. London. Box (16)0653.

SOMEONE TO SHARE THE SUNSHINE WITH. I live in a sunny country and have a good life-style. I'm tall, attractive, elegant, a novelist and good fun. Is there a man who is erudite as well as humorous, age approx. 45-55, about 6', with whom I can share life and who can help to nuture felicity. Photo please, and definitely no chancers. Box (16)0664.

TALL, HANDSOME, professional, Middle-Eastern man, 33, seeks slim, attractive lady, aged 20-35; enjoys wining, dining, travel. Photo please, for passionate friendship. Box (16)0640.

WARM, ATTRACTIVE, divorced, professional woman, 37, working class roots. Enjoys walking, good food, lively conversation. Seeks similar, solvent, humorous, intelligent, tall, slim, non-smoking man, 30-45. Share love, laughter. B'ham/West Midlands. Box (16)0660.

WELL-TRAVELLED male, forties, above average education/experience, seeks new friend, female, to share leisure/life. Yorks based. Box (16)0634.

37 YEAR-OLD f. graduate, would welcome male companionship. I'm not pretty, but warm-hearted and an excellent cook. Usual leftish interests in politics/books/music/countryside. NW Region. Box (16) 0632.

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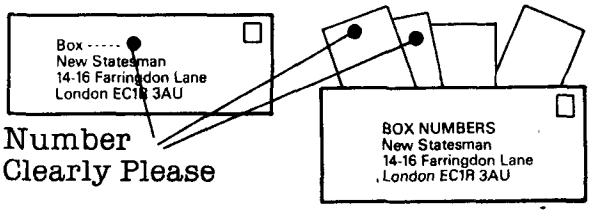

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